

AFTER-DINNER

SHORT STORIES

BY

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

TWELFTH SERIES

Translated from the French

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THE PEDLAR.

HOW many trifling occurrences, things which have left only a passing impression on our minds, humble dramas of which we have got a mere glimpse so that we have to guess at or suspect their real nature are, while we are still young and inexperienced, threads, so to speak, guiding us, step by step, towards a knowledge of the painful truth!

Every moment, when I am retracing my steps during the long wandering reveries which distract my thoughts along the path through which I saunter at random, my soul takes wing, and, suddenly, I recall little incidents of a gay or sinister character, which, emerging from the shades of the past, flit before my memory as the birds flit through the bushes before my eyes.

This summer, I wandered along a road in Savoy which commands a view of the right bank of the Lake of Bourget, and, while my glance floated over that mass of water, mirror-like and blue, with a unique blue, pale, tinted with glittering beams by the setting sun, I felt my heart stirred by that attachment which I have had since my childhood for

the surface of lakes, for rivers, and for the sea. On the opposite bank of the vast liquid plate, so wide that you did not see the ends of it, one vanishing in the Rhone, and the other in the Bourget, rose the high mountain, jagged like a crest up to the topmost peak of the "Cat's Tooth." On either side of the road, vines, trailing from tree to tree, choked under their leaves their slender supporting branches, and they extended in garlands through the fields, green, yellow, and red garlands, festooning from one trunk to the other, and spotted with clusters of dark grapes.

The road was deserted, white and dusty. All of a sudden, a man emerged out of the thicket of large trees which shuts in the village of Saint-Innocent, and, bending under a load, he came towards me, leaning on a stick.

When he came closer to me, I discovered that he was a pedlar, one of those itinerant dealers who go about the country from door to door, selling paltry objects cheaply, and thereupon a reminiscence of long ago arose up in my mind, a mere nothing almost, the recollection simply of an accidental meeting I had one night between Argenteuil and Paris when I was twenty-one.

All the happiness of my life, at this period, was derived from boating. I had taken a room in an obscure inn at Argenteuil, and, every evening, I took the Government clerk's train, that long, slow train which, in its course, sets down at different stations a crowd of men with little parcels, fat and heavy, for they scarcely walk at all, so that their trousers are always baggy, owing to their constant occupation of the office-stool. This train, in which it seemed to me I could even sniff the odour of the writing-desk, of official documents and boxes, deposited me at Argenteuil. My boat was waiting for me, ready to glide over the water. And

I rapidly plied my oar so that I might get out and dine at Bezons or Chatou or Joinville or Saint-Ouen. Then I came back, put up my boat, and made my way back on foot to Paris, with the moon shining down on me.

Well, one night on the white road I perceived just in front of me a man walking. Oh! I was constantly meeting those night travellers of the Parisian suburbs so much dreaded by belated citizens. This man went on slowly before me with a heavy load on his shoulders.

I came up to him by quickening my pace so much that my footsteps rung on the road. He stopped and turned round; then, as I kept approaching nearer and nearer, he crossed to the opposite side of the road.

As I rapidly passed him, he called out to me.

"Hallo! good evening, monsieur."

I responded —

"Good evening, mate."

He went on —

"Are you going far?"

"I am going to Paris."

"You won't be long getting there, you're going at a good pace. As for me, I have too big a load on my shoulders to walk so quickly."

I slackened my pace. Why had this man spoken to me? What was he carrying in this big pack? Vague suspicions of crime sprang up in my mind, and rendered me curious. The columns of the newspapers every morning contain so many accounts of crimes committed in this place, the peninsula of Gennevilliers, that some of them must be true. Such things are not invented merely to amuse readers — all this catalogue of arrests and varied misdeeds with which the reports of the law courts are

However, this man's voice seemed rather timid than bold, and up to the present his manner had been more discreet than aggressive.

In my turn I began to question him :—

"And you, are you going far?"

"Not farther than Asnieres."

"Is Asnieres your place of abode?"

"Yes, monsieur, I am a pedlar by occupation, and live at Asnieres."

He had quitted the sidewalk, where pedestrians move along in the daytime under the shadow of the trees, and he was soon in the middle of the road. I followed his example. We kept staring at each other suspiciously, each of us holding his stick in his hand. When I was sufficiently close to him, I felt less distrustful. He evidently was disposed to assume the same attitude towards me, for he asked :

"Would you mind going a little more slowly?"

"Why do you say this?"

"Because I don't care for this road by night. I have goods on my back, and two are always better than one. When two men are together, people don't attack them."

I felt that he was speaking truly, and that he was afraid. So I yielded to his wishes, and the pair of us walked on side by side, this stranger and I, at one o'clock in the morning, along the road leading from Argenteuil to Asnieres.

"Why are you going home so late when it is so dangerous?" I asked my companion.

He told me his history. He had not intended to return home this evening, as he had brought with him that very morning a stock of goods to last him three or four days. But he had been so fortunate in disposing of them that he found it necessary to

get back to his abode without delay in order to deliver next day a number of things which had been bought on credit.

He explained to me with genuine satisfaction that he had managed the business very well, having a tendency to talk confidentially, and that the nick-nacks he displayed were useful to him in getting rid, while gossiping, of other things which he could not easily sell.

He added:—

"I have a shop at Asnieres. 'Tis my wife keeps it."

"Ah! So you're married?"

"Yes, m'sieur, for the last fifteen months. I have got a very nice wife. She'll get a surprise when she sees me coming home to-night."

He then gave me an account of his marriage. He had been after this young girl for two years, but she had taken time to make up her mind.

She had, since her childhood, kept a little shop at the corner of a street, where she sold all sorts of things—ribbons, flowers in summer, and principally pretty little shoe-buckles, and many other gewgaws, in which, owing to the favour of a manufacturer, she enjoyed a speciality. She was well-known in Asnieres as "Bluette." This name was given to her because she often dressed in blue. And she made money, as she was very skillful in everything she did. His impression was that she was not very well at the present moment; he believed she was in the family way, but he was not quite sure. Their business was prospering; and he travelled about exhibiting samples to all the small traders in the adjoining districts. He had become a sort of travelling commission-agent for some of the manufacturers, working at the same time for them and for himself.

"And you--what are you?" he said.

I answered him with an air of embarrassment, I

explained that I had a sailing-boat and two yawls in Argenteuil, that I came for a row every evening, and that, as I was fond of exercise, I sometimes walked back to Paris, where I had a profession, which, - I led him to infer—was a lucrative one."

He remarked :—

"Faith, if I had spondulies like you, I wouldn't amuse myself by trudging that day along the roads at night. - 'Tisn't safe along here."

He gave me a sidelong glance, and I asked myself whether he might not all the same be a criminal of the sneaking type, who did not want to run any fruitless risk.

Then he restored my confidence, when he murmured : -

"A little less quickly, if you please. This pack of mine is heavy."

The sight of a group of houses showed that we had reached Asnières.

"I am nearly at home," he said. "We don't sleep in the shop; it is watched at night by a dog, but a dog who is worth four men. And then it costs too much to live in the centre of the town. But listen to me, monsieur! You have rendered me a precious service, for I don't feel my mind at ease when I'm travelling with my pack along the roads. Well, now you must come in with me, and drink a glass of mulled wine with my wife if she hasn't gone to bed, for she is a sound sleeper, and doesn't like to be waked up. Besides, I'm not a bit afraid of my pack, and so I'll see you to the gates of the city with a cudgel in my hand."

I declined the invitation; he insisted on my coming in; I still held back; he pressed me with so much eagerness with such an air of real disappointment, such expressions of deep regret—for he had the art of expressing himself very forcibly—asking me in the tone of one who felt wounded "whether

I objected to have a drink with a man like him," that I finally gave way and followed him up a lonely road towards one of those big dilapidated houses which are to be found on the outskirts of suburbs.

In front of this dwelling I hesitated. This high barrack of plaster looked like a den for vagabonds, a hiding-place for suburban brigands. But he pushed forward a door which had not been locked, and made me go before him. He led me forward by the shoulders, through profound darkness, towards a staircase where I had to feel my way with my hands and feet, with a well-grounded apprehension of tumbling into some gaping cellar.

When I reached the first landing, he said to me :— "Go on up! 'Tis the sixth story."

I searched in my pockets, and, finding there a box of vestas, I lighted the way up the ascent. He followed me, puffing under his pack, repeating :—

" 'Tis high! 'tis high!"

When we were at the top of the house, he drew forth from one of his inside pockets a key attached to a thread, and unlocking his door he made me enter.

It was a little white-washed room, with a table in the centre, six chairs, and a kitchen cupboard close to the wall.

"I am going to wake up my wife," he said; "then I am going down to the cellar to fetch some wine; it doesn't keep here."

He approached one of the two doors which opened out of this apartment, and exclaimed :—

"Bluette! Bluette!" Bluette did not reply. He called out in a louder tone :—"Bluette! Bluette!"

Then knocking at the partition with his fist, he growled :—"Will you wake up in God's name?"

He waited, glued his ear to the key-hole, and

muttered, in a calmer tone :—"Pooh! if she is asleep, she must be let sleep! I'll go and get the wine; wait a couple of minutes for me."

He disappeared. I sat down and made the best of it.

What had I come to this place for? All of a sudden, I gave a start, for I heard people talking in low tones, and moving about quietly, almost noiselessly, in the room where the wife slept.

Dence take it! Had I fallen into some cursed trap? Why had this woman—this *Bluette*—not been awakened by the hard knocking of her husband at the doorway leading into her room; could it have been merely a signal conveying to accomplices :—"There's a mouse in the trap! I'm going to look out to prevent him escaping.. 'Tis for you to do the rest."

Certainly, there was more stir than before now in the inner room; I heard the door opening from within. My heart throbbed. I retreated towards the further end of the apartment, saying to myself : "I must make a fight of it!" and, catching hold of the back of a chair with both hands, I prepared for a desperate struggle.

The door was half open, a hand appeared which kept it ajar; then a head, a man's head covered with a billycock hat, slipped through the folding doors, and I saw two eyes staring hard at me. Then so quickly that I had not time to make a single movement by way of defence, the individual, the supposed criminal, a tall young fellow in his bare feet with his shoes in his hand, a good-looking chap, I must admit—half a gentleman, in fact, made a dash for the outer door, and rushed down the stairs.

I resumed my seat. The adventure was assuming a humorous aspect. And I waited for the husband, who took a long time fetching the wine. At last, I heard him coming up the stairs, and the sound

of his footsteps made me laugh, with one of those solitary laughs which it is hard to restrain.

He entered with two bottles in his hands. Then he asked me :—

“Is my wife still asleep? You didn't hear her stirring—did you?”

I knew instinctively that there was an ear pasted against the other side of the partition-door, and I said :—“No, not at all.”

And now he again called out :—

“Pauline!”

She made no reply, and did not even move.

He came back to me, and explained :—

“You see, she doesn't like me to come home at night, and take a drop with a friend.”

“So then you believe she was not asleep?”

He wore an air of dissatisfaction.

“Well, at anyrate,” he said, “let us have a drink together.”

And immediately he showed a disposition to empty the two bottles one after the other without more ado.

This time I did display some energy. When I had swallowed one glass I rose up to leave. He no longer spoke of accompanying me, and with a sullen scowl, the scowl of a common man in an angry mood, the scowl of a brute whose violence is only slumbering, in the direction of his wife's sleeping apartment, he muttered :—

“She'll have to open that door when you've gone.”

I stared at the poltroon, who had worked himself into a fit of rage without knowing why, perhaps owing to an obscure presentiment, the instinct of the deceived male who does not like closed doors.

He had talked about her to me in a tender strain, now, assuredly, he was going to beat her.

He exclaimed, as he shook the lock once more —
“Pauline!”

A voice like that of a woman waking out of a deep sleep, replied from behind the partition

“Eh! what?”

“Didn’t you hear me come in?”

“No, I was asleep! Let me rest!”

“Open the door!”

“Yes, when you’re alone — I don’t like you to be bringing home fellows at night to drink with you.”

Then I took myself off, stumbling down the stairs, as the other man, of whom I had been the accomplice, had done. And, as I resumed my journey towards Paris, I realised that I had just witnessed in this wretched abode a scene of the eternal drama which is being acted every day, under every form, and amongst every class.

THE AVENGER

WHEN M. Antoine Leuillet married the Widow Mathilde Souris, he had been in love with her for nearly ten years.

M. Souris had been his friend, his old college chum. Leuillet was very fond of him, but found him rather a brute. He often used to say,—"That poor Souris will never set the Seine on fire."

When Souris married Mlle. Mathilde Duval, Leuillet was surprised and somewhat vexed, for he had a slight weakness for her. She was the daughter of a neighbour of his, a retired haberdasher, with a good bit of money. She was pretty, well-mannered and intelligent. She accepted Souris on account of his money.

Then Leuillet cherished hopes of another sort. He began paying attentions to his friend's wife. He was a handsome man, not at all stupid, and also well off. He was confident that he would succeed; he failed. Then he fell really in love with her, and he was the sort of lover who is rendered timid, prudent, and embarrassed by intimacy with the husband. Mme. Souris fancied that he no longer meant anything serious by his attentions to her, and she became simply his friend. This state of affairs lasted nine years.

Now, one morning, Leuillet received a startling communication from the poor woman. Souris had died suddenly of aneurism of the heart.

He got a terrible shock, for they were of the same age; but the very next moment a sensation of profound joy, of infinite relief, of deliverance, penetrated his body and soul. Mme. Souris was free.

He had the tact, however, to make such a display of grief as the occasion required; he waited for the proper time to elapse, and attended to all the conventional usages. At the end of fifteen months he married the widow.

His conduct was regarded as not only natural but generous. He had acted like a good friend and an honest man. In short, he was happy, quite happy.

They lived on terms of the closest confidence, having from the first understood and appreciated each other. One kept nothing secret from the other, and they told each other their inmost thoughts. Leuillet now loved his wife with a calm, trustful affection, he loved her as a tender, devoted partner, who is an equal and a confidante. But there still lingered in his soul a singular and unaccountable grudge against the deceased Souris, who had been the first to possess this woman, who had had the flower of her youth and of her soul, and who had even robbed her of her poetic attributes. The memory of the dead husband spoiled the happiness of the living husband, and this posthumous jealousy now began to torment Leuillet's heart day and night.

The result was that he was incessantly talking about Souris, asking a thousand minute and intimate questions about him, and seeking information as to all his habits and personal characteristics. And he pursued him with ruses even into the depths of the tomb, recalling with self-satisfaction his oddities, emphasising his absurdities, and pointing out his defects.

Every minute he kept calling out to his wife from one end to the other of the house :—

"Hallo, Mathilde!"

"Here I am, dear."

"Come and let us have a chat."

She always came over to him, smiling, well aware that Souris was to be the subject of the chat, and

anxious to gratify her second husband's harmless
 lad.

"I say! do you remember how Souris wanted one
 day to prove to me that small men are always bet-
 ter loved than big men!"

And he launched out into recollections unfavour-
 able to the defunct husband, who was small, and
 discreetly complimentary to himself, as he happen-
 ed to be tall.

And Mme. Leuillet let him think that he was
 quite right; and she laughed very heartily, turned
 the first husband into ridicule in a playful fashion
 for the amusement of his successor, who always
 ended by remarking:—

"Never mind! Souris was a mug!"

They were happy, quite happy. And Leuillet
 never ceased to testify his unabated attachment to
 his wife by all the usual manifestations.

Now, one night when they happened to be both
 kept awake by the renewal of youthful ardour,
 Leuillet, who held his wife clasped tightly in his
 arms, and had his lips glued to hers, said:—

"Tell me, darling."

"What?"

"Souris—'tisn't easy to put the question—was he
 very—very amorous?"

She gave him a warm kiss, as she murmured:—

"Not so much as you, my duck."

His male vanity was flattered, and he went on:—

"He must have been—rather a flat—eh?"

She did not answer. There was merely a sly
 little laugh on her face, which she pressed close to
 her husband's neck.

He persisted in his questions:—

"Come now! Don't deny that he was a flat—
 well, I mean, rather an awkward sort of fellow!"

She nodded slightly.

"Well, yes, rather awkward."

He went on—

"I'm sure he used to weary you many a night-- isn't that so?"

This time she had an access of frankness, and she replied :—

"Oh! yes."

He embraced her once more when she made this acknowledgement, and murmured :—

"What an ass he was! You were not happy with him?"

She answered :—

"No. He was not always jolly."

Leuillet felt quite delighted, making a comparison in his own mind between his wife's former situation and her present one.

He remained silent for some time; then, with a fresh outburst of merit, he said :—

"Tell me this!"

"What?"

"Will you be quite candid--quite candid with me?"

"Certainly, dear."

"Well, look here! Have you never been tempted to—to deceive this imberile, Souris?"

Mme. Leuillet uttered a little "Oh!" in a shame-faced way, and again cuddled her face closer to her husband's chest. But he could see that she was laughing.

He persisted :—

"Come now, confess it! He had a head just suited for a cuckold, this blockhead! It would be so funny! This good Souris! Oh! I say, darling, you might tell it to me—only to me!"

He emphasised the words 'to me,' feeling certain that if she wanted to show any taste when she deceived her husband, he, Leuillet, would have been the man; and he quivered with joy at the expectation of this avowal, sure that if she had not been the virtuous woman she was he could have had her then.

But she did not reply, laughing incessantly, as it at the recollection of something infinitely comical.

Leuillet, in his turn, burst out laughing at the notion that he might have made a cuckold of Souis. What a good joke! What a capital bit of fun, to be sure!

He exclaimed in a voice broken by convulsions of laughter —

"Oh! poor Souis! poor Souis! Ah! yes, he had that sort of head—oh, certainly he had!"

And Mme. Leuillet now twisted herself under the sheets, laughing till the tears almost came into her eyes.

And Leuillet repeated "Come, confess it! confess it! Be candid. You must know that it cannot be unpleasant to me to hear such a thing."

Then she stammered, still choking with laughter "Yes, yes."

Her husband pressed her for an answer.

"Yes, what? Look here! tell me everything."

She was now laughing in a more subdued fashion, and, raising her mouth to Leuillet's ear, which was held towards her in anticipation of some pleasant piece of confidence, she whispered. "Yes, I did deceive him!"

He felt a cold shiver down his back, and utterly dumfounded, he gasped —

"You—you—did—really—deceive him?"

She was still under the impression that he thought the thing infinitely pleasant, and replied:

"Yes really—really "

He was obliged to sit up in bed so great was the shock he received, holding his breath, just as overwhelmed as if he had just been told that he was a cuckold himself. At first, he was unable to articulate properly, then, after the lapse of a minute or so, he merely ejaculated

"Ah!"

She, too, had stopped laughing now, realising her mistake too late

Leuillet at length asked

'And with whom?'

She kept silent, cudgeling her brain to find some excuse

He repeated his question

"With whom?"

At last she said

"With a young man "

He turned towards her abruptly, and in a dry tone said

"Well, I suppose it wasn't with some kitchen slut. I ask you who was the young man—do you understand?"

She did not answer. He tore away the sheet which she had drawn over her head, and pushed her into the middle of the bed, repeating:

"I want to know with what young man—do you understand?"

Then, she replied with some difficulty in uttering the words:

"I only wanted to laugh." But he fairly shook with rage:—"What! How is that! You only wanted to laugh? So then you were making game of me? I'm not going to be satisfied with these evasions. I ask you what was the young man's name?"

She did not reply, but lay motionless on her back.

He caught hold of her arm and pressed it tightly.

"Do you hear me, I say! I want you to give me an answer when I speak to you."

Then she said, in nervous tones:

"I think you must be going mad! Let me alone!"

He trembled with fury, so exasperated that he scarcely knew what he was saying, and, shaking her with all his strength, he repeated:

"Do you hear me? do you hear me?"

She wrenched herself out of his grasp with a sudden movement, and with the tips of her fingers slapped her husband on the nose. He entirely lost his temper, feeling that he had been struck, and angrily pounced down on her.

He now held her under him, boxing her ears in a most violent manner, and exclaiming:

"Take that—and that—and that—there you are you trollop, you stumpet, you strumpet!"

Then, when he was out of breath, exhausted from beating her, he got up, and went over to the chest of drawers to get himself a glass of sugared orange water, for he was almost ready to faint after his exertion.

And she lay huddled up in bed, crying and heaving great sobs, feeling that there was an end to her happiness, and that it was all her own fault.

Then, in the midst of her tears, she faltered:

"Listen, Antonie, come here! I told you a lie—listen! I'll explain it to you."

And now, prepared to defend herself, armed with excuses and subterfuges, she slightly raised her head all tangled under her crumpled night-cap.

And he, turning towards her, drew close to her, ashamed at having whacked her, but feeling in-

tensely till in his heart's core is a husband an inexhaustible hatred against that woman who had deceived his predecessor, Sonnis

ALL OVER

THE Comte de Tormerin had just finished dressing himself. He cast a parting glance at the large glass, which occupied an entire panel of his dressing room, and smiled.

He was really a fine looking man still, though he was quite grey. Tall, slight, elegant, with no projecting paunch, with a scanty moustache of doubtful shade on his thin face, which seemed fair rather than white, he had presence, that "chic" in short, that indescribable something which establishes between two men more difference than millions.

He murmured "Tormerin is still alive"

And he made his way into the drawing room where his correspondence awaited him.

On his table, where everything had its place, the work table of the gentleman who never works there were a dozen letters lying beside three newspapers of different opinions. With a single touch of the finger he exposed to view all these letters, like a gambler giving the choice of a card; and he scanned the handwriting, a thing he did each morning before tearing open the envelopes.

It was for him a moment of delightful expectancy, of inquiry and vague anxiety. What did these

sealed mysterious papers bring him? What did they contain of pleasure, of happiness, or of grief? He surveyed them with a rapid sweep of the eye, recognising in each case the hand that wrote them, selecting them, making two or three lots, according to what he expected from them. Here, friends, there, persons to whom he was indifferent; further on, strangers. The last kind always gave him a little uneasiness. What did they want from him? What hand had traced those curious characters, full of thoughts, promises, or threats?

This day one letter in particular caught his eye. It was simple nevertheless, without seeming to reveal anything; but he regarded it with disquietude, with a sort of internal shiver.

He thought:—"From whom can it be? I certainly know this writing, and yet I can't identify it."

He raised it to a level with his face, holding it delicately between two fingers, striving to read through the envelope without making up his mind to open it.

Then he smelled it, and snatched up from the table a little magnifying glass which he used in studying all the niceties of handwriting. He suddenly felt unnerved. "Who is this from? This hand is familiar to me, very familiar. I must have often read its writings, yes, very often. But this must have been a long, long time ago. Who the deuce can it be from? Pooh! 'tis only from somebody asking for money."

And he tore open the letter. Then he read—

"My dear Friend, -You have, without doubt, forgotten me, for it is now twenty-five years since we saw each other. I was young. I am old. When I bade you farewell, I quitted Paris in order to follow into the provinces my husband, my old husband, whom you used to call 'my hospital.' Do

you remember him? He died five years ago, and now I am returning to Paris to get my daughter married, for I have a daughter, a beautiful girl of eighteen, whom you have never seen. I informed you about her entrance into the world, but you certainly did not pay much attention to so trifling an event.

"You, you are always the handsome Lormerin, so I have been told. Well, if you still recollect little Lise, whom you used to call Lison, come and dine this evening with her, with the elderly Baronne de Vance, your ever faithful friend, who, with some emotion, stretches out to you, without complaining of her lot, a devoted hand, which you must clasp, but no longer kiss my poor "Jaquet."

"Lise de Vance."

Lormerin's heart began to throb. He remained sunk in his armchair, with the letter on his knees, staring straight before him, overcome by poignant feelings that made the tears mount up to his eyes!

If he had ever loved a woman in his life it was this one, little Lise, Lise de Vance, whom he called "Cinder-Flower" on account of the strange colour of her hair, and the pale grey of her eyes. Oh! what a true, pretty, charming creature she was, this frail Baronne, the wife of that gouty, pimply Baron, who had abruptly carried her off to the provinces, shut her up, kept her apart through jealousy, through jealousy of the handsome Lormerin.

Yes, he had loved her, and he believed that he, too, had been truly loved. She familiarly gave him the name of Jaquet, and she used to pronounce that word in an exquisite fashion.

A thousand memories that had been effaced came back to him, far off and sweet and melancholy now. One evening she called on him on her way home from a ball, and they went out for a stroll in the Bois de Boulogne, she was in evening dress, he in

his dressing-jacket. It was springtime; the weather was beautiful. The odour of her bodice embalmed the warm air—the colour of her bodice, and a little, the odour of her skin. What a divine night! When they reached the lake, as the moon's rays fell across the branches into the water, she began to weep. A little surprised, he asked her why.

She replied :

"I don't know. 'Tis the moon and the water that have affected me. Every time I see poetic things, they seize hold of my heart, and I have to cry."

He smiled, moved himself, considering her feminine emotion charming—the emotion of a poor little woman whom every sensation overwhelms. And he embraced her passionately, stammering :

"My little Lise, you are exquisite."

What a charming love affair, short-lived and dainty it had been, and all over too so quickly, cut short in the midst of its ardour by this old brute of a Baron, who had carried off his wife, and never shown her afterwards to anyone!

Lorimerin had forgotten, in good sooth, at the end of two or three months. One woman drives out the other so quickly in Paris, when one is a bachelor. No matter, he had kept a little chapel for her in his heart, for he had loved her alone! He assured himself now that this was so.

He rose up, and said aloud :—"Certainly, I will go and dine with her this evening!"

And instinctively he turned round towards the glass in order to inspect himself from head to foot. He reflected :—"She must have grown old unpleasantly, more than I have!" And he felt gratified at the thought of showing himself to her still handsome, still fresh, of astonishing her, perhaps of filling her with emotion, and making her regret those bygone days so far, far distant!

He turned his attention to the other letters. They were not of importance.

The whole day he kept thinking of this phantom. What was she like now? How funny it was to meet in this way after twenty five years! Would he alone recognise her?

He made his toilette with feminine coquetry, put on a white waistcoat, which suited him better with the coat, sent for the hairdresser to give him a brushing touch with the curling iron, for he had preserved his hair, and started early in order to show his eagerness to see her.

The first thing he saw on entering a pretty drawing room freshly furnished, was his own portrait, an old faded photograph, dating from the days of his good fortune, hanging on the wall in an antique silk frame.

He sat down and waited. A door opened behind him. He rose up abruptly, and, turning round, beheld an old woman with white hair, who extended both hands towards him.

He seized them, kissed them one after the other with long, long kisses, then, lifting up his head, he gazed at the woman he had loved.

Yes, it was an old lady, an old lady whom he did not recognise, and who, while she smiled, seemed ready to weep.

He could not abstain from murmuring

"It is you, Lisa?"

She replied:

"Yes, it is I; it is I, indeed. You would not have known me, isn't that so? I have had so much sorrow—so much sorrow. Sorrow has consumed my life. Look at me now—or rather don't look at me! But how handsome you have kept—and young! If I had by chance met you in the street, I would have cried, 'Jaquet!' Now sit down and let us first of all have a chat. And then I'll show you my daughter, my grown up daughter. You'll see

how she resembles me—or rather how I resemble her—no, it is not quite that; she is just like the ‘me’ of former days—you shall see! But I wanted to be alone with you first. I feared that there would be some emotion on my side, at the first moment. Now it is all over; it is past. Pray be seated, my friend.”

He sat down beside her, holding her hand; but he did not know what to say; he did not know this woman—it seemed to him that he had never seen her before. What had he come to do in this house? Of what could he speak? Of the long ago? What was there in common between him and her? He could no longer recall anything to mind in the presence of this grandmotherly face. He could no longer recall to mind all the nice, tender things so sweet, so bitter, that had assailed his heart, some time since, when he thought of the other, of little Lise, of the dainty “Cinder-Flower.” What then had become of her, the former one, the one he had loved? that woman of far-off dreams, the blonde with grey eyes, the young one who used to call him “Jaquet” so prettily?

They remained side by side, motionless, both constrained, troubled, profoundly ill at ease.

As they only talked in commonplace phrases, broken and slow, she rose up, and pressed the button of the bell.

“I am going to call Rence,” she said.

There was a tap at the door, then the rustle of a dress; next, a young voice exclaimed:

“Here I am, mamma!”

Lormerin remained scared, as if at the sight of an apparition.

He stammered:

“Good-day, Mademoiselle.”

Then, turning towards the mother:

“Oh! it is you!”

In fact, it was she, she whom he had known in

by-gone days, the Lise who had vanished and come back! In her he found the woman he had won twenty-five years before. This one was, even younger still, fresher, more childlike.

He felt a wild desire to open his arms, to clasp her to his heart again, murmuring in her ear:

"Good-day, Lison!"

A man-servant announced:

"Dinner is ready, Madame."

And they proceeded towards the dining-room.

What passed at this dinner? What did they say to him, and what could he say in reply? He found himself plunged in one of those strange dreams which border on insanity. He gazed at the two women with a fixed idea in his mind, a morbid, self-contradictory idea:

"Which is the real one?"

The mother smiled, repeating over and over again:

"Do you remember?" And it was in the bright eye of the young girl that he found again his memories of the past. Twenty times he opened his mouth to say to her: "Do you remember, Lison?" forgetting this white-haired lady who was regarding him with looks of tenderness.

And yet there were moments when he no longer felt sure, when he lost his head. He could see that the woman of to-day was not exactly the woman of long ago. The other one, the former one, had in her voice, in her glance, in her entire being, something which he did not find again. And he made prodigious efforts of mind to recall his lady love, to seize again what had escaped from her to him, what this resuscitated one did not possess.

The Baronne said:

"You have lost your old sprightliness, my poor friend."

He murmured :

"There are many other things that I have lost !"

But in his heart, touched by emotion, he felt his old love springing to life once more, like an awakened wild beast ready to bite him.

The young girl went on chattering, and every now and then some familiar phrase of her mother, which she had borrowed, a certain style of speaking and thinking, that resemblance of mind and manner which people acquire by living together, shook Lormerin from head to foot. All these things penetrated him, making the re-opened wound of his passion bleed anew.

He got away early, and took a turn along the boulevard. But the image of this young girl pursued him, haunted him, quickened his heart, inflamed his blood. Apart from the two women, he now saw only one, a young one, the one of former days returned, and he loved her as he had loved her in by-gone years. He loved her with a greater ardour, after an interval of twenty-five years.

He went home to reflect on this strange and terrible thing, and to think on what he should do.

But, as he was passing, with a wax candle in his hand, before the glass, the large glass in which he had contemplated himself and admired himself before he started, he saw reflected there an elderly, grey-haired man : and suddenly he recollected what he had been in olden days, in the days of little Lise. He saw himself charming and handsome, as he had been when he was loved ! Then, drawing the light nearer, he looked at himself more closely, as one inspects a strange thing with a magnifying glass, tracing the wrinkles, discovering those frightful ravages, which he had not perceived till now.

And he sat down, crushed at the sight of himself, at the sight of his lamentable image, murmuring

"All over, I'm over!"

LITTER BOUND ON A DROWNED MAN

YOU ask me, madame whether I am laughing at you? You cannot believe that a man has never been smitten with love. Well, no I have never loved, never!

What is the cause of this? I really cannot tell. Never have I been under the influence of that sort of intoxication of the heart which we call love! Never have I lived in that dream, in that exaltation, in that state of madness into which the image of a woman casts us. I have never been pursued, haunted, roused to fever-heat, lifted up to Paradise by the thought of meeting, or by the possession of, a being who had suddenly become for me more desirable than any good fortune, more beautiful than any other creature, more important than the whole world! I have never wept; I have never suffered, on account of any of you. I have not passed my nights thinking of one woman without closing my eyes. I have no experience of waking up with the thought and the memory of her shedding that illumination on me. I have never known the wild desperation of hope when she was about

' LITTLE FOUND ON A DROWNED MAN. 27

to come, or the divine sadness of regret when she parted with me, leaving behind her in the room a delicate odour of violet powder and flesh

I have never been in love

I, too, have often asked myself why is this And truly I can scarcely tell. Nevertheless, I have found some reasons for it, but they are of a metaphysical character, and perhaps you will not be able to appreciate them

I suppose I sit too much in judgment on women to submit much to their fascination. I ask you to forgive me for this remark. I am going to explain what I mean In every creature there is a moral being and a physical being In order to love, it would be necessary for me to find a harmony between these two beings, which I have never found One has always too great a predominance over the other, sometimes the moral, sometimes the physical

The intellect which we have a right to require in a woman, in order to love her, is not the same as male intellect It is more and it is less A woman must have a mind open, delicate, sensitive, refined, impressionable She has no need of either power or initiative in thought, but she must have kindness, elegance, tenderness, coquetry, and that faculty of assimilation which, in a little while, raises her to an equality with him who shared her life Her greatest quality must be tact, that supple sense which is to the mind what touch is to the body It reveals to her a thousand little things, contours, angles, and forms in the intellectual order.

Very frequently pretty women have not intellect to correspond with their personal charms Now the slightest lack of harmony strikes me and pains me at the first glance In friendship, this is not of importance. Friendship is a compact in which one fairly divides defects and merits • We may

judge of friends, whether man or woman, take in to account the good they possess, neglect the evil that is in them, and appreciate their value exactly, while giving ourselves up to an intimate sympathy of a deep and fascinating character.

In order to love, one must be blind, surrender oneself absolutely, see nothing, reason on nothing, understand nothing. One must adorn the weakness as well as the beauty of the beloved object, renounce all judgment, all reflection, all perspicacity.

I am incapable of such blindness, and rebel against a seductiveness not founded on reason. This is not all. I have such a high and subtle idea of harmony, that nothing can ever realise my ideal. But you will call me a madman. Listen to me. A woman, in my opinion, may have an exquisite soul and a charming body, without that body and that soul being in perfect accord with one another. I mean that persons who have noses made in a certain shape, are not to be expected to think in a certain fashion. The fat have no right to make use of the same words and phrases as the thin. You, who have blue eyes, madame, cannot look at life and judge of things and events as if you had black eyes. The shades of your eyes should correspond, by a sort of fatality, with the shades of your thought. In perceiving these things I have the scent of a bloodhound. Laugh if you like, but it is so.

And yet I imagined that I was in love for an hour, for a day. I had foolishly yielded to the influence of surrounding circumstances. I had allowed myself to be beguiled by the mirage of an aurora. Would you like me to relate for you this short history.

* * *

I met, one evening, a pretty enthusiastic woman, who wanted, for the purpose of humouring a poetic

fancy, to spend a night with me in a boat on a river. I would have preferred a room and a bed, however, I consented to take instead the river and the boat.

It was in the month of June. My fair companion chose a moonlight night in order to excite her imagination all the better.

We had dined at a riverside inn, and then we set out in the boat about ten o'clock. I thought it a rather foolish kind of adventure, but as my companion pleased me I did not bother myself too much about this. I sat down on the seat facing her. I seized the oars, and off we started.

I could not deny that the scene was picturesque. We glided past a wooded isle full of nightingales, and the current carried us rapidly over the river covered with silvery ripples. The toads uttered their shrill, monotonous cry, the frogs croaked in the grass by the river's bank, and the lapping of the water as it flowed on made around us a kind of confused murmur almost imperceptible, disquieting, and gave us a vague sensation of mysterious fear.

The sweet charm of warm nights and of streams glittering in the moonlight penetrated us. It seemed bliss to live and float thus, and to dream and to feel by one's side a young woman sympathetic and beautiful.

I was somewhat affected, somewhat agitated, somewhat intoxicated by the pale brightness of the night and the consciousness of my proximity to a lovely woman.

"Come and sit beside me," she said.

I obeyed.

She went on.

"Recite some verses for me."

This appeared to be rather too much. I declined, she persisted. She certainly wanted to have the utmost pleasure, the whole orchestra of senti-

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ment, from the moon to the rhymes of poets. In the end I had to yield, and, as if in mockery, I recited for her a charming little poem by Louis Bouilbet, of which the following are a few strophes:—

"I hate the poet who with tearful eye
Murmurs some name while gazing towards a star,
Who sees no magic in the earth or sky,
Unless Lizette or Ninon be not far.
"The bard who in all Nature nothing sees
Divine, unless a petticoat he ties
Amorously to the branches of the trees
Or nightcap to the grass, is scarcely wise
"He has not heard the eternal's thunder tone,
The voice of Nature in her various moods
Who cannot tread the dim lawns alone,
And of no woman dream 'mid whispering woods "

I expected some reproaches. Nothing of the sort she murmured.

"How true it is!"

I remained stupefied. Had she understood?

Our boat was gradually drawing nearer to the bank, and got entangled under a willow, which impeded its progress. I drew my arm around my companion's waist, and very gently moved my lips towards her neck. But she repulsed me with an abrupt, angry movement.

"Have done, pray! You are rude!"

I tried to draw her towards me. She resisted, caught hold of the tree, and was near flinging us both into the water. I deemed the prudent course to cease my importunities.

She said:

"I would rather have you capsized. I feel so happy. I want to dream—that is so nice." Then, in a slightly malicious tone, she added,

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"Have you, then, already forgotten the verses you recited to me just now?"

.. She was right. I became silent.

She went on:

"Come! now!"

And I plied the oars once more.

I began to find the night long and to see the absurdity of my conduct.

My companion said to me.

"Will you make me a promise?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"To remain quiet, well-behaved, and discreet, if I permit you"

"What? Say what you mean!"

{ "Here is what I mean! I want to lie down on my back at the bottom of the boat with you by my side. But I forbid you to touch me, to embrace me—in short, to—to caress me."

I promised. She warned me:

"If you move, I'll capsize the boat."

And then we lay down side by side, our eyes turned towards the sky, while the boat glided slowly through the water. We were rocked by the gentle movements of the shallop. The light sounds of the night came to us more distinctly in the bottom of the boat, sometimes causing us to start. And I felt springing up within me a strange, poignant emotion, an infinite tenderness, something like an irresistible impulse to open my arms in order to embrace, to open my heart in order to love, to give myself, to give my thoughts, my body, my life, my entire being to someone.

My companion murmured, like one in a dream:

"Where are we? Where are we going? It seems to me that I am quitting the earth. How sweet it is! Ah! if you loved me—a little! ! !"

My heart began to throb. I had no answer to give. It seemed to me that I loved her. I had no longer any violent desire. I felt happy there by her side, and that was enough for me.

And thus we remained for a long, long time without stirring. We caught each other's hands; some delightful force rendered us motionless, an unknown force stronger than ourselves, an alliance, chaste, intimate, absolute of our persons lying side by side which belonged to each other without touching. What was this? How do I know. Love, perhaps?

Little by little, the dawn appeared. It was three o'clock in the morning. Slowly, a great brightness spread over the sky. The boat knocked against something. I rose up. We had come close to a tiny islet.

But I remained ravished, in a state of ecstasy. In front of us stretched the shining firmament, red, rosy, violet, spotted with fiery clouds resembling golden vapours. The river was glowing with purple, and three houses on one side of it seemed to be burning.

I bent towards my companion. I was going to say, "Oh! look!" But I held my tongue, quite dazed, and I could no longer see anything except her. She, too, was rosy, with the rosy flesh tints with which must have mingled a little the hue of the sky. Her tresses were rosy; her eyes were rosy; her teeth were rosy; her dress, her laces, her smile, all were rosy. And in truth, I believed, so overpowering was the illusion, that the aurora was there before me.

She rose softly to her feet, holding out her lips to me; and I moved towards her, trembling, delirious, feeling indeed that I was going to kiss Heaven, to his happiness, to kiss a dream which had become a woman, to kiss the ideal which had descended into human flesh.

She said to me. "You have a caterpillar in your hair." And suddenly I felt myself becoming as sad as if I had lost all hope in life.

That is all madame. It is puerile, silly, stupid. But I am sure that since that day it would be impossible for me to love. And yet—who can tell?

[The young man upon whom this letter was found was yesterday taken out of the Seine between Bougival and Marly. An obliging hargoman, who had searched the pockets in order to ascertain the name of the deceased, brought this paper to the author]

MOTHER AND SON

WE were chatting in the smoking-room after a dinner at which only men were present. We talked about unexpected legacies, strange inheritances. Then M. le Bruient, who was sometimes called "the illustrious master," and at other times the "illustrious advocate," came and stood with his back to the fire.

"I have," he said, "just now to search for an heir who disappeared under peculiarly terrible circumstances. It is one of those simple and leetocious dramas of ordinary life, a thing which possibly happens every day, and which is nevertheless one of the most dreadful things I know. Here are the facts:

"Nearly six months ago I got a message to come to the side of a dying woman. She said to me:

"Monsieur, I want to entrust to you the most delicate, the most difficult, and the most wearisome mission that can be conceived. Be good enough

to take cognizance of my will, which is there on the table. A sum of five thousand francs is left to you as a fee if you do not succeed, and a hundred thousand francs if you do succeed. I want to have my son found after my death'

"She asked me to assist her to sit up in the bed, in order that she might be able to speak with greater ease, for her voice, broken and gasping, was quivering in her throat.

"I saw that I was in the house of a very rich person. The luxurious apartment, with a certain simplicity in its luxury, was upholstered with materials solid as the walls, and their soft surface imparted a caressing sensation, so that every word uttered seemed to penetrate their silent depths and to disappear and die there.

The dying woman went on

"You are the first to hear my horrible story. I will try to have strength enough to go on to the end of it. You must know everything so that you, whom I know to be a kind-hearted man of the world, should have a sincere desire to aid me with all your power.

"Listen to me

"Before my marriage, I loved a young man, whose suit was rejected by my family because he was not rich enough. Not long afterwards, I married a man of great wealth. I married him through ignorance, through obedience, through indifference, as young girls do marry.

"I had a child, a boy. My husband died in the course of a few years.

"He whom I had loved had got married, in his turn. When he saw that I was a widow, he was crushed by horrible grief at knowing he was not free. He came to see me: he wept and sobbed so

bitterly before my eyes that it was enough to break my heart. He at first came to see me as a friend. Perhaps I ought not to have seen him. What would I have? I was alone, so sad, so solitary, so hopeless! And I loved him still. What sufferings we women have to endure!

"I had only him in the world, my parents also being dead. He came frequently; he spent whole evenings with me. I should not have let him come so often, seeing that he was married. But I had not enough of will-power to prevent him from coming.

"How am I to tell you what next happened?"

" He became my lover. How did this come about? Can I explain it? Can anyone explain such things? Do you think it could be otherwise when two human beings are drawn towards each other by the irresistible force of a passion by which each of them is possessed? Do you believe, monsieur, that it is always in our power to resist, that we can keep up the struggle for ever, and refuse to yield to the prayers, the supplications, the tears, the frenzied words, the appeals on bended knees, the transports of passion, with which we are pursued by the man we adore, whom we want to gratify even in his slightest wishes, whom we desire to crown with every possible happiness, and whom, if we are to be guided by a worldly code of honour, we must drive to despair. What strength would it not require? What a renunciation of happiness? what self-denial? and even what virtuous selfishness?

"In short, monsieur, I was his mistress; and I was happy. I became—and this was my greatest weakness and my greatest piece of cowardice—I became his wife's friend.

"We brought up my son together: we made a

man of him, a thorough man, intelligent, full of sense and resolution, of large and generous ideas. The boy reached the age of seventeen.

"He, the young man, was fond of my — my lover, almost as fond of him as I was myself, for he had been equally cherished and cared for by both of us. He used to call him his 'dear friend,' and respected him immensely, having never received from him anything but wise counsels, and a good example of rectitude, honour, and probity. He looked upon him as an old loyal and devoted comrade of his mother, and a sort of moral father, tutor, protector — how am I to describe it?

"Perhaps the reason why he never asked any questions was that he had been accustomed from his earliest years to see this man in the house, by his side, and by my side, always concerned about us both.

"One evening the three of us were to dine together (these were my principal festive occasions), and I waited for the two of them, asking myself which of them would be the first to arrive. The door opened; it was my old friend. I went towards him, with outstretched arms; and he drew his lips towards mine in a long, delicious kiss.

"All of a sudden, a sound, a rustling which was barely audible, that mysterious sensation which indicates the presence of another person, made us start and turn round with a quick movement. Jean, my son, stood there, livid, staring at us.

"There was a moment of atrocious confusion. I drew back, holding out my hand towards my son as, if in supplication; but I could see him no longer. He had gone.

"We remained facing each other—my love and I—crushed, unable to utter a word. I sank down on an arm-chair, and I felt a desire, a vague,

powerful desire to fly, to go out into the night, and to disappear for ever. Then, convulsive sobs rose up in my throat, and I wept, shaken with spasms, with my heart torn asunder, all my nerves writhing with the horrible sensation of an irremediable misfortune, and with that dreadful sense of shame which, in such moments as this, falls on a mother's heart.

"He looked at me in a scared fashion, not venturing to approach me or to speak to me or to touch me, for fear of the boy's return. At last he said :

" 'I am going to follow him—to talk to him—to explain matters to him. In short, I must see him and let him know——

" 'And he hurried away.

" 'I waited—I waited in a distracted frame of mind, trembling at the least sound, convulsed with terror, and filled with some unutterably strange and intolerable emotion by every slight crackling of the fire in the grate.

" 'I waited for an hour, for two hours, feeling my heart swell with a dread I had never before experienced, such an anguish that I would not wish the greatest criminals to have ten minutes of such misery. Where was my son? What was he doing?

" 'About midnight a messenger brought a note from my lover. I still know its contents by heart :

" 'Has your son returned? I did not find him. I am down here. I do not want to go up at this hour.'

" 'I wrote in pencil on the same slip of paper :

" 'Jean has not returned. You must go and find him.'

" 'And I remained all night in the armchair, waiting for him.'

"I felt as if I were going mad. I longed to have to run wildly about, to roll myself on the ground. And yet I did not even stir, but kept waiting hour after hour. What was going to happen? I tried to imagine, to guess. But I could form no conception, in spite of my efforts, in spite of the tortures of my soul!

"And now my apprehension was lest they might meet. What would they do in that case? What would my son do? My mind was lacerated by fearful doubts, by terrible suppositions.

"You understand what I mean, do you not, monsieur?

"My chambermaid, who knew nothing, who understood nothing, was coming in every moment, believing, naturally, that I had lost my reason. I sent her away with a word or movement of the hand. She went for the doctor, who found me in the throes of a nervous fit.

"I was put to bed. I got an attack of brain-fever.

"When I regained consciousness, after a long illness, I saw beside my bed my—lover—alone.

"I exclaimed :

"My son? Where is my son?

"He replied :

"No, no, I assure you every effort has been made by me to find him, but I have failed.

"Then, becoming suddenly exasperated and even indignant—for women are subject to such outbursts of unaccountable and unreasoning anger, I said :

"I forbid you to come near me or to see me again unless you find him. Go away!"

"He did go away.

"I have never seen one or the other of them

since, monsieur, and thus I have lived for the last twenty years

"Can you imagine what all this meant to me? Can you understand this monstrous punishment, this slow, perpetual laceration of a mother's heart, this abominable, endless waiting? Endless, did I say? No; it is about to end, for I am dying. I am dying without ever again seeing either of them—either one or the other!

"He—the man I loved—has written to me every day for the last twenty years; and I—I have never consented to see him, even for a second, for I had a strange feeling that, if he came back here, it would be at that very moment my son would again make his appearance! Ah! my son! my son! Is he dead? Is he living? Where is he hiding? Over there, perhaps, at the other side of the ocean, in some country so far away that even its very name is unknown to me! Does he ever think of me? Ah! if he only knew! How cruel children are! Did he understand to what frightful suffering he condemned me, into what depths of despair, into what tortures, he cast me while I was still in the prime of life, leaving me to suffer like this even to this moment, when I am going to die—me, the mother, who loved him with all the violence of a mother's love! Oh! isn't it cruel, cruel?

"You will tell him all this, monsieur—will you not? You will repeat for him my last words.

"My child, my dear, dear child, be less harsh towards poor women! Life is already brutal and savage enough in its dealings with them. My dear son, think of what the existence of your poor mother has been ever since the day when you left her. My dear child, forgive her, and love her, now that she is dead, for she had had to endure the most frightful penance ever inflicted on a woman."

"She gasped for breath, shuddering, as if she had addressed the last words to her son, and as if he stood by her bedside.

Then she added :

" 'You will tell him also, monsieur, that I never again saw—the other.' "

"Once more she ceased speaking, then, in a broken voice, she said :

" 'Leave me now, I beg of you. I want to die all alone, since they are not with me.' "

Maitre De Brument added :

"And I left the house, messieurs, crying like a fool, so vehemently, indeed, that my coachman turned round to stare at me.

"And to think that, every day, heaps of dramas like this are being enacted all around us.

"I have not found the son—that son—well, say what you like about him, but I call him that criminal son !"

THE SPASM.

THE hotel guests slowly entered the dining-room, and sat down in their places. The waiters began to attend on them in a leisurely fashion so as to enable those who were late to arrive, and so as to avoid bringing back the dishes, and the old bathers, the *habitués*, those whose season was advancing, gazed with interest towards the door, whenever it opened, with a desire to see new faces appearing.

This is the principal distraction of health-resorts. People look forward to the dinner-hour in order to inspect each day's new arrivals, to find out who they are, what they do, and what they think. A vague longing springs up in the mind, a longing for agreeable meetings, for pleasant acquaintances, perhaps for love-adventures. In the life of elbowings, not only those with whom we come into daily contact, but strangers, assume an extreme importance. Curiosity is aroused, sympathy is ready to exhibit itself, and sociability is the order of the day.

We cherish antipathies for a week and friendships for a month. We see other people with different eyes, when we view them through the medium of the acquaintanceship that is brought about at health-resorts. We discover in men suddenly, after an hour's chat, in the evening after dinner, under the trees in the park where the generous spring bubbles up, a high intelligence and astonishing merits, and a month afterwards, we have completely forgotten these new friends, so fascinating when we first met them.

There also are formed lasting and serious ties

more quickly than anywhere else. People see each other every day; they become acquainted very quickly; and with the affection thus originated is mingled something of the sweetness and self-abandonment of longstanding intimacies. We cherish in after years the dear and tender memories of those first hours of friendship, the memory of those first conversations through which we have been able to unveil a soul, of those first glances which interrogate and respond to the questions and secret thoughts which the mouth has not as yet uttered, the memory of that first cordial confidence, the memory of that delightful sensation of opening our hearts to those who are willing to open theirs to us.

And the melancholy of health-resorts, the monotony of days that are all alike, help from hour to hour in this rapid development of affection.

* * *

Well, this evening, as on every other evening, we awaited the appearance of strange faces.

Only two appeared, but very remarkable looking, a man and a woman—father and daughter. They immediately produced the same effect on my mind as some of Edgar Poe's characters; and yet there was about them a charm, the charm associated with misfortune. I looked upon them as the victims of fatality. The man was very tall and thin, rather stooping, with hair perfectly white for his comparatively youthful physiognomy; and there was in his bearing, and in his person, that austerity peculiar to Protestants. The daughter, who was probably twenty-four or twenty-five, was small in stature, and was also very thin, very pale, and she had the air of one who was worn out with utter lassitude. We meet people like this from time to time, who seem too weak for the tasks and the needs of daily life, too weak to move about, to walk, to do all that we do every day. This young

girl was very pretty, with the diaphanous beauty of a phantom, and she ate with extreme slowness, as if she were almost incapable of moving her arms.

It must have been she assuredly who had come to take the waters.

They found themselves facing me at the opposite side of the table, and I at once noticed that the father had a very singular and nervous spasm.

Every time he wanted to reach an object, his hand made a hook-like movement, a sort of irregular zigzag, before it succeeded in touching what it was in search of; and, after a little while, this action was so wearisome to me that I turned aside my head in order not to see it.

I noticed, too, that the young girl, during meals, wore a glove on her left hand.

After dinner I went for a stroll in the park of the thermal establishment. This led towards the little Auverguere station of Chatel Guyon, hidden in a gorge at the foot of the high mountain, of that mountain from which flow so many boiling springs, arising from the deep bed of extinct volcanoes. Over there, above us, the domes, which had once been craters, raised their mutilated heads on the summit of the long chain. For Chatel Guyot is situated at the spot where the region of domes begins.

Beyond it, stretches out the region of peaks, and further on again the region of precipices.

The "Puy de Dome" is the highest of the domes, the Peak of Sancy is the loftiest of the peaks, and Cantal is the most precipitous of these mountain-heights.

This evening it was very warm. I walked up and down a shady path, on the side of the mountain overlooking the park, listening to the opening strains of the Casino band.

And I saw the father and daughter advancing

slowly in my direction. I saluted them, as we are accustomed to salute our hotel companions at health-resorts; and the man, coming to a sudden halt, said to me:

"Could you not, monsieur, point out to us a short walk, nice and easy, if that is possible? and excuse my intrusion on you."

I offered to show them the way towards the valley through which the little river flowed, a deep valley forming a gorge between two tall, craggy, wooded slopes.

They gladly accepted my offer.

And we talked, naturally, about the virtues of the waters.

"Oh!" he said, "my daughter has a strange malady, the seat of which is unknown. She suffers from incomprehensible nervous disorders. At one time, the doctors think she has an attack of heart disease, at another time, they imagine it is some affection of the liver, and at another time they declare it to be a disease of the spine. To-day, her condition is attributed to the stomach, which is the great caldron and regulator of the body, that Protean source of diseases with a thousand forms and a thousand susceptibilities to attack. This is why we have come here. For my part, I am rather inclined to think it is the nerves. In any case it is very sad."

Immediately the remembrance of the violent spasmodic movement of his hand came back to my mind, and I asked him:

"But is this not the result of heredity? Are not your own nerves somewhat affected?"

He replied calmly:

"Mine? Oh! no—my nerves have always been very steady."

Then, suddenly, after a pause, he went on:

"Ah! You are alluding to the spasm in my hand every time I want to reach for anything? This arises from a terrible experience which I had. Just imagine! this daughter of mine was actually buried alive!"

I could only give utterance to the word "Ah!" so great were my astonishment and emotion.

* * *

He continued :

"Here is the story. It is simple. Juliette had been subject for some time to serious attacks of the heart. We believed that she had disease of that organ, and we were prepared for the worst.

"One day she was carried into the house cold, lifeless, dead. She had fallen down unconscious in the garden. The doctor certified that life was extinct. I watched by her side for a day and two nights. I laid her with my own hands in the coffin, which I accompanied to the cemetery, where she was deposited in the family vault. It is situated in the very heart of Lorraine.

"I wished to have her interred with her jewels, bracelets, necklaces, rings, all presents which she had got from me, and with her first ball-dress on.

"You may easily imagine the state of my mind in which I was when I returned home. She was the only one I had, for my wife had been dead for many years. I found my way to my own apartment in a half-distracted condition, utterly exhausted, and I sank into an easy-chair, without the capacity to think or the strength to move. I was nothing better now than a suffering, vibrating machine, a human being who had, as it were, been flayed alive; my soul was like a living wound.

"My old valet, Prosper, who had assisted me in placing Juliette in her coffin, and preparing her for her last sleep, entered the room noiselessly, and asked :

"Does monsieur want anything?"

"I merely shook my head, by way of answering 'No.'

"He urged, 'Monsieur is wrong. He will bring some illness on himself. Would monsieur like me to put him to bed?'

"I answered: 'No! let me alone!'

"And he left the room.

"I know not how many hours slipped away. Oh! what a night! what a night! It was cold. My fire had died out in the huge grate: and the wind, the winter wind, an icy wind, a hurricane accompanied by frost and snow, kept blowing against the window with a sinister and regular noise.

"How many hours slipped away? There I was without sleeping, powerless, crushed, my eyes wide open, my legs stretched out, my body limp, inanimate, and my mind torpid with despair. Suddenly, the great bell of the entrance gate, the great bell of the vestibule, rang out.

"I got such a shock that my chair cracked under me. The solemn, ponderous sound vibrated through the empty chateau as if through a vault. I turned round to see what the hour was by the clock. It was just two in the morning. Who could be coming at such an hour!

"And abruptly the bell rang twice. The servants, without doubt, were afraid to get up. I took a wax-candle and descended the stairs. I was on the point of asking 'Who is there?'

"Then, I felt ashamed of my weakness, and I slowly opened the huge door. My heart was throbbing wildly; I was frightened; I hurriedly drew back the door, and in the darkness I distinguished a white figure, standing erect, something that resembled an apparition.

"I recoiled, petrified with horror, faltering:

"Who—who—who are you?

"A voice replied :

"It is I, father."

"It was my daughter.

"I really thought I must be mad, and I retreated backwards before this advancing spectre. I kept moving away, making a sign with my hand, as it to drive the phantom away, that gesture which you have noticed—that gesture of which since then I have never got rid.

"Do not be afraid, papa; I am not dead. Somebody tried to steal my rings, and cut one of my fingers, the blood began to flow, and this reanimated me."

"And, in fact, I could see that her hand was covered with blood.

"I fell on my knees, choking with sobs, and with a rattling in my throat.

"Then, when I had somewhat collected my thoughts, though I was still so much dismayed that I scarcely realised the gruesome good-fortune that had fallen to my lot, I made her go up to my room, and sit down in my easy-chair; then I ran excitedly for Prosper to get him to light the fire again and to get her some wine and summon the rest of the servants to her assistance.

"The man entered, stared at my daughter, opened his mouth with a gasp of alarm and stupefaction, and then fell back insensible.

"It was he who had opened the vault, and who had mutilated, and then abandoned, my daughter, for he could not efface the traces of the theft. He had not even taken the trouble to put back the coffin in its place, feeling sure, besides, that he would not be suspected by me, as I completely trusted him.

"You see, monsieur, that we are very unhappy people "

* * *

He stopped.

The night had fallen, casting its shadows over the desolate, mournful vale, and a sort of mysterious fear possessed me at finding myself by the side of those strange beings, of this young girl who had come back from the tomb, and this father with his uncanny spasm.

I found it impossible to make any comment on this dreadful story. I only murmured :

"What a horrible thing !"

Then, after a minute's silence, I added :

"Suppose we go back. I think it is getting cold."

And we made our way back to the hotel.

A DUEL.

THE war was over. The Germans occupied France

The country was panting like a wrestler lying under the knee of his successful opponent.

The first trains from Paris, after the city's long agony of famine and despair, were making their way to the new frontiers, slowly passing through the country districts and the villages. The passengers gazed through the windows at the ravaged fields and burnt hamlets. Prussian soldiers, in their black helmets with brass spikes, were smoking their pipes on horseback or sitting on chairs in front of the houses which were still left stand-

ing. Others were working or talking just as if they were members of the families. As you passed through the different towns you saw entire regiments drilling in the squares, and in spite of the rumble of the carriage-wheels, you could every moment hear the hoarse words of command.

M. Dubuis, who, during the entire siege, had served as one of the National Guard in Paris, was going to join his wife and daughter, whom he had prudently sent away to Switzerland before the invasion.

Famine and hardship had not diminished his big paunch, so characteristic of the rich, peace loving merchant. He had gone through the terrible events of the past year with sorrowful resignation and bitter complaints at the savagery of man. Now that he was journeying to the frontier at the close of the war, he saw the Prussians for the first time, although he had done his duty at the ramparts, and staunchly mounted guard on cold nights.

He stared with mingled fear and anger at those bearded, armed men, installed all over French soil as if in their own homes, and he felt in his soul a kind of fever of impudent patriotism even while he yielded to that other instinct of discretion and self-preservation which never leaves us. In the same compartment, two Englishmen, who had come to the country as sightseers, were gazing around with looks of stolid curiosity. They were both also stout, and kept chattering in their own language, sometimes referring to the guide-book, and reading in loud tones the names of the places indicated.

Suddenly, the train stopped at a little village station, and a Prussian officer jumped up with a great clatter of his sabre on the double footboard of the railway-carriage. He was tall, wore a tight-fitting uniform, and his face had a very shaggy

aspect. His red hair seemed to be on fire, and his long moustache, of a paler colour, was stuck out on both sides of his face, which it seemed to cut in two.

The Englishmen at once began staring at him, with smiles of newly-awakened interest, while M. Dubuis made a show of reading a newspaper. He sat crouched in a corner, like a thief in the presence of a gendarme.

The train started again. The Englishmen went on chatting, and looking out for the exact scene of different battles, and, all of a sudden, as one of them stretched out his arm towards the horizon to indicate a village, the Prussian officer remarked in French, extending his long legs and lolling backwards :

"We killed a dozen Frenchmen in that village, and took more than a hundred prisoners."

The Englishman, quite interested, immediately asked :

"Ha! and what is the name of this village?"

The Prussian replied :

"Pharsbourg."

He added : "We caught these French blackguards by the ears."

And he glanced towards M. Dubuis, laughing into his moustache in an insulting fashion.

The train rolled on, always passing through hamlets occupied by the victorious army. German soldiers could be seen along the roads, on the edges of fields, standing in front of gates, or chatting outside cafes. They covered the soil like African locusts.

The officer said, with a wave of his hand :

"If I were in command, I'd take Paris, burn everything, kill everybody: No more France!"

The Englishman, through politeness, replied simply : "Ah! yes."

He went on :

"In twenty years all Europe, all of it, will belong to us. Prussia is more than a match for all of them."

The Englishmen, getting uneasy, said nothing in answer to this. Their faces, which had become impassive, seemed made of wax behind their long whiskers. Then, the Prussian officer began to laugh. And, still lolling back, he began to sneer. He sneered at the downfall of France, insulted the prostrate enemy: he sneered at Austria which had been recently conquered; he sneered at the furious but fruitless defence of the departments; he sneered at the Garde Mobile and at the useless artillery. He announced that was going to build a city of iron with the captured cannon. And suddenly he pushed his boots against the thigh of M. Dubuis, who turned his eyes round, reddening to the roots of his hair.

The Englishmen seemed to have assumed an air of complete indifference, as if they had found themselves all at once shut up in their own island, far from the din of the world.

The officer took out his pipe, and looking fixedly at the Frenchman, said:

"You haven't got any tobacco—have you?"

M. Dubuis replied:

"No, monsieur."

The German said:

"You might go and buy one for me when the train stops next."

And he began laughing afresh, as he added:

"I'll let you have the price of a drink."

The train whistled, and slackened its pace. They had reached a station which had been burnt down; and here there was a regular stop.

The German opened the carriage-door, and, catching M. Dubuis by the arm, said:

"Go and do what I told you—quick, quick!"

A Prussian detachment occupied the station. Other soldiers were looking on from behind wooden gratings. The engine was already getting up steam in order to start off again. Then M. Dubuis hurriedly jumped on the platform, and, in spite of the warnings of the stationmaster, dashed into the adjoining compartment.

* *

He was alone! He tore open his waistcoat, and rapidly did his heart beat, and, panting for breath, he wiped the perspiration off his forehead.

The train drew up at another station. And suddenly the officer appeared at the carriage-door and jumped in, followed close behind by the two Englishmen, who were impelled by curiosity. The German sat facing the Frenchman, and, laughing still, said:

"You did not want to do what I asked you?"

M. Dubuis replied:

"No, monsieur."

The train had just left the station.

The officer said:

"I'll cut off your moustache to fill my pipe with."

And he put out his hand towards the Frenchman's face.

The Englishmen kept staring in the same impassive fashion and fixed glances.

Already the German had caught hold of the moustache and was tugging at it, when M. Dubuis, with a back stroke of his hand, threw back the officer's arm, and, seizing him by the collar, flung him down on the seat. Then, excited to a pitch of fury, with his temples swollen and his eyes glaring, he kept throttling the officer with one hand, while with the other clenched, he began to strike him violent blows in the face. The Prussian struggled, tried

to draw his sabre, and to get a grip, while lying back, of his adversary. But M. Dubuis crushed him with the enormous weight of his stomach, and kept hitting him without taking breath or knowing where his blows fell. Blood flowed down the face of the German, who, choking and with a rattling in his throat, spat forth his broken teeth, and vainly strove to shake off this infuriated man who was killing him.

The Englishmen had got on their feet and came closer in order to see better. They remained standing, full of mirth and curiosity, ready to bet for or against each of the combatants.

And suddenly M. Dubuis, exhausted by his violent efforts, went and resumed his seat without uttering a word.

The Prussian did not attack him, for the savage assault had scared and terrified the officer. When he was able to breathe freely, he said :

"Unless you give me satisfaction with pistols, I will kill you."

M. Dubuis replied :

"Whenever you like. I'm quite ready."

The German said :

"Here is the town of Strashourg. I'll get two officers to be my seconds, and there will be time before the train leaves the station."

M. Dubuis, who was puffing as much as the engine, said to the Englishmen :

"Will you be my seconds?"

They both answered together :

"Ah! yes."

And the train stopped.

In a minute, the Prussian had found two comrades who carried pistols, and they made their way towards the ramparts.

The Englishmen were continually looking at their watches, shuffling their feet, and hurrying on with the preparations, uneasy lest they should be too late for the train.

M. Dubuis had never fired a pistol in his life.

They made him stand twenty paces away from his adversary. He was asked :

"Are you ready?"

While he was answering "Yes, monsieur," he noticed that one of the Englishmen had opened his umbrella in order to keep off the rays of the sun.

A voice gave the word of command :

"Fire!"

M. Dubuis fired at random without minding what he was doing, and he was amazed to see the Prussian staggering in front of him, lifting up his arms, and immediately afterwards falling straight on his face. He had killed the officer.

One of the Englishmen ejaculated, "Ah!" quivering with delight, satisfied curiosity, and joyous impatience. The other, who still kept his watch in his hand, seized M. Dubuis's arm, and hurried him in double-quick time towards the station, his fellow-countryman counting their steps, with his arms pressed close to his sides—"One! two; one! two!"

And all three marching abreast, they rapidly made their way to the station like three grotesque figures in a comic newspaper.

The train was on the point of starting. They sprang into their carriage. Then, the Englishmen, taking off their travelling-caps, waved them three times over their heads, exclaiming :

"Hip! hip! hip! hurrah!"

Then gravely, one after the other, they stretched out the right hand to M. Dubuis, and they went back and sat in their corner.

THE LOVE OF LONG AGO

THE old fashioned chateau was built on a wooded height. Tall trees surrounded it with dark greenery, and the vast park extended its vistas here over a deep forest and there over an open plain. Some little distance from the front of the mansion stood a huge stone basin in which marble nymphs were bathing. Other basins arranged in order succeeded each other down as far as the foot of the slope, and a hidden fountain sent cascades dancing from one to the other.

From the manor-house, which preserved the grace of a superannuated coquette down to the grotto encrusted with shell-work, where slumbered the loves of a bygone age, everything in this antique demesne had retained the physiognomy of former days. Everything seemed to speak still of ancient customs, of the manners of long ago, of faded galantries, and of the elegant trivialities so dear to our grandmothers.

In a parlour in the style of Louis XV, whose walls were covered with shepherds paying court to shepherdesses, beautiful ladies in hoop-petticoats, and gallant gentlemen in wigs, a very old woman, who seemed dead as soon as she ceased to move, was almost lying down in a large easy-chair, while her thin, mummy-like hands hung down, one at each side of her.

Her eyes were gazing languidly towards the distant horizon, as if they sought to follow through the park visions of her youth. Through the open window every now and then came a breath of air laden with the scent of grass and the perfume of flowers. It made her white locks flutter around her wrinkled forehead, and old memories floated through her brain.

Beside her, on a tapestried stool, a young girl with long, fair hair, hanging in plaits over her neck, was embroidering an altar-cloth. There was a pensive expression in her eyes, and it was easy to see that, while her agile fingers worked, her brain was busy with thoughts.

But the old lady suddenly turned round her head :

"Berthe," she said, "read something out of the newspapers for me, so that I may still know sometimes what is happening in the world."

The young girl took up a newspaper, and cast a rapid glance over it.

"There is a great deal about politics, grandmamma; am I to pass it by?"

"Yes, yes, darling. Are there no accounts of love affairs? Is gallantry, then, dead in France, that they no longer talk about abductions or adventures as they did formerly?"

The girl made a long search through the columns of the newspaper.

"Here is one," she said, "It is entitled, 'A Love Drama.'"

The old woman smiled through her wrinkles.

"Read that for me," she said.

And Berthe commenced. It was a case of vitriol-throwing. A wife, in order to avenge herself on her husband's mistress, had burned her face and eyes. She had left the Assize Court acquitted, declared to be innocent, amid the applause of the crowd.

The grandmother moved about excitedly in her chair, and exclaimed :

"This is horrible—why, it is perfectly horrible! See whether you can find anything else to read for me, darling."

Berthe again made a search; and further down in the reports of criminal cases, at which her attention was still directed, she read :

"Gloomy Drama—A shop girl, no longer young, allowed herself to yield to the embraces of a young man. Then, to avenge herself on her lover, whose heart proved fickle, she shot him with a revolver. The unhappy man is maimed for life. The jury, consisting of men of moral character, took the part of the murderess—regarding her as the victim of illicit love, and honourably acquitted her."

This time the old grandmother appeared quite shocked, and, in a trembling voice, she said :

"Why you are mad, then, nowadays. You are mad! The good God has given you love, the only allurements in life. Man has added to this gallantry, the only distraction of our dull hours, and here are you mixing up with it vitriol and revolvers, as if one were to put mud into a flagon of Spanish wine."

Berthe did not seem to understand her grandmother's indignation.

"But grandmamma this woman avenged herself. Remember she was married, and her husband deceived her."

The grandmother gave a start.

"What ideas have they been filling your head with, you young girls of to-day?"

Berthe replied :

"But marriage is sacred, grandmamma."

The grandmother's heart, which had its birth in the great age of gallantry, gave a sudden leap.

"It is love that is sacred," she said, "Listen, child, to an old woman who has seen three generations, and who has had a long, long experience of men and women. Marriage and love have nothing in common. We marry to found a family, and we form families to constitute society. Society cannot dispense with marriage. If society is a chain, each family is a link in that chain. In order to weld

those links, we always seek for metals of the same kind. When we marry, we must bring together suitable conditions; we must combine fortunes, unite similar races, and aim at the common interest, which is riches and children. We marry only once, my child, because the world requires us to do so, but we may love twenty times in one lifetime because nature has made us like this. Marriage, you see, is law, and love is an instinct, which impels us sometimes along a straight and sometimes along a crooked path. The world has made laws to combat our instincts—it was necessary to make them; but our instincts are always stronger, and we ought not to resist them too much, because they come from God, while the laws only come from men. If we did not perfume life with love, as much love as possible, darling, as we put sugar into drugs for children, nobody would care to take it just as it is."

Berthe opened her eyes widely in astonishment. She murmured:

"Oh! grandmamma, we can only love once."

The grandmother raised her trembling hands towards Heaven, as if to invoke the defunct God of gallantries. She exclaimed indignantly:

"You have become a race of serfs, a race of common people. Since the Revolution, it is impossible any longer to recognise society. You have attached big words to every action, and wearisome duties to every corner of existence; you believe in equality and eternal passion. People have written verses telling you that people have died of love. In my time verses were written to teach men to love every woman. And we! when we liked a gentleman, my child, we sent him a page. And when a fresh caprice came into our hearts, we were not slow in getting rid of the last lover—unless we kept both of them."

The old woman smiled with a keen smile, and a

gleam of roguery twinkled in her gray eye, the sprightly, sceptical roguery of those people who did not believe that they were made of the same clay as the others, and who lived as masters for whom common beliefs were not made.

The young girl, turning very pale, faltered out
"So then women have no honour?"

The grandmother ceased to smile. If she had kept in her soul some of Voltaire's irony, she had also a little of Jean-Jacques's glowing philosophy. "No honour! because we loved, and dared to say so; and even boasted of it! But, my child, if one of us, amongst the greatest ladies in France, were to live without a lover, she would have the entire court laughing at her. Those who wished to live differently had only to enter a convent. And you imagine, perhaps, that your husband will love you alone all their lives. As if, indeed, this could be the case. I tell you that marriage is a thing necessary in order that society should exist, but it is not in the nature of our race, do you understand? There is only one good thing in life, and that is love. And how you misunderstand it! how you spoil it! You treat it as something solemn, like a sacrament, or something to be bought, like a dress."

The young girl caught the old woman's trembling hands in her own.

"Hold you tongue, I beg of you, grandmamma!"

And on her knees, with tears in her eyes, she prayed to Heaven, to bestow on her a great passion alone, in accordance with the dream of modern poets, while the grandmother, kissing her on the forehead, quite penetrated still by that charming healthy logic by which the philosophers of gallantry sprinkled salt with the life of the eighteenth century, murmured:

"Take care, my poor darling! If you believe in such follies as this, you will be very unhappy."

AN UNCOMFORTABLE BED.

ONE autumn I went to stay for the hunting season with some friends in a chateau in Picardy.

My friends were fond of practical joking, as all my friends are. I do not care to know any other sort of people.

When I arrived, they gave me a princely reception, which at once aroused distrust in my breast. We had some capital shoofooing. They embraced me, they enjoked me, as if they expected to have great fun at my expense.

I said to myself :

"Look out, old ferret ! They have something in preparation for you."

During the dinner the mirth was excessive, far too great, in fact. I thought :—"Here are people who take a double share of amusement, and apparently without reason. They must be looking out in their own minds for some good bit of fun. Assuredly I am to be the victim of the joke. Attention !"

During the entire evening everyone laughed in an exaggerated fashion. I smelled a practical joke in the air, as a dog smells game. But what was it ? I was watchful, restless. I did not let a word or a meaning or a gesture escape me. Everyone seemed to me an object of suspicion, and I even looked distrustfully at the faces of the servants.

The hour rang for going to bed, and the whole household came to escort me to my room. Why ? They called to me :—"Good night." I entered the

apartment, shut the door, and remained standing, without moving a single step, holding the wax-candle in my hand.

I heard laughter and whispering in the corridor. Without doubt they were spying on me. I cast a glance around the walls, the furniture, the ceiling, the hangings, the floor. I saw nothing to justify suspicion. I heard persons moving about outside my door. I had no doubt they were looking through the keyhole.

An idea came into my head :—"My candle may suddenly go out and leave me in darkness."

Then I went across to the mantelpiece, and lighted all the wax-candles that were on it. After that, I cast another glance around me without discovering anything. I advanced with short steps, carefully examining the apartment. Nothing. I inspected every article one after the other. Still nothing. I went over to the window. The shutters, large wooden shutters, were open. I shut them with great care, and then drew the curtains, and I placed a chair in front of them, so as to have nothing to fear from without.

Then I cautiously sat down. The arm-chair was solid. I did not venture to get into bed. However, time was flying, and I ended by coming to the conclusion that I was ridiculous. If they were spying on me, as I supposed, they must, while waiting for the success of the joke they had been preparing for me, have been laughing enormously at my terror. So I made up my mind to go to bed. But the bed was particularly suspicious-looking. I pulled at the curtains. They seemed to be secure. All the same there was danger. I was perhaps going to receive a cold shower-bath from overhead, or perhaps, the moment I stretched myself out, to find myself sinking under the floor with my mattress. I searched my memory for all the practical jokes of which I ever had experience.

*And I did not want to be caught. Ah! certainly not! certainly not! Then I suddenly bethought myself of a precaution which I consider one of extreme efficacy: I caught hold of the side of the mattress gingerly, and very slowly drew it towards me. It came away, followed by the sheet and the rest of the bed-clothes. I dragged all these objects into the very middle of the room, facing the entrance-door. I made my bed over again as best I could at some distance from the suspected bedstead and the corner which had filled me with such anxiety. Then I extinguished the candles, and, groping my way, I slipped under the bed-clothes.

For at least another hour, I remained awake, starting at the slightest sound. Everything seemed quiet in the chateau. I fell asleep.

I must have been in a deep sleep for a long time, but all of a sudden, I was awakened with a start by the fall of a heavy body tumbling right on top of my own body, and, at the same time, I received on my face, on my neck, and on my chest a burning liquid which made me utter a howl of pain. And a dreadful noise, as if a sideboard laden with plates and dishes had fallen down, penetrated my ears.

I felt myself suffocating under the weight that was crushing me and preventing me from moving. I stretched out my hand to find out what was the nature of this object. I felt a face, a nose, and whiskers. Then with all my strength I launched out a blow over this face. But I immediately received a hail of cuffings which made me jump straight out of the soaked sheets, and rush in my nightshirt into the corridor, the door which I found open.

O stupor! it was broad daylight. The noise brought my friends hurrying into the apartment, and we found sprawling over my improvised bed, the dismayed valet, who, while bringing me my

morning cup of tea, had tripped over the obstacle in the middle of the floor, and fallen on his stomach, spilling, in spite of himself, my breakfast over my face.

The precautions I had taken in closing the shutters and going to sleep in the middle of the room had only brought about the interlude I had been striving to avoid.

And how they all laughed that day!

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A WARNING NOTE.

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I HAVE received the following letter. Thinking that it may be profitable to many readers, I make it my business to communicate it to them.

"Paris, November 15th, 1886.

"Monsieur, You often treat either in the shape of short stories or chronicles, of subjects which have relation to what I may describe as 'current morals.' I am going to submit to you some reflections which ought, it seemed to me, to furnish you with the materials for one of your tales.

"I am not married: I am a bachelor, and, as it seems to me, a rather simple man. But I fancy that many men, the greater part of men, are simple in the way that I am. As I am always, or nearly always, a plain dealer, I am not well able to see through the natural cunning of my neighbours, and I go straight ahead, with my eyes open,, without

sufficiently looking out for what is behind things and behind people's external behaviour.

"We are nearly all accustomed, as a rule, to take appearances for realities, and to look on people as what they pretend to be; and very few possess that scent which enables certain men to divine the real and hidden nature of others. From this peculiar and conventional method of regarding life come the result that we pass, like moles, through the midst of events; and that we never believe in what is, but in what seems to be, that we declare a thing to be improbable as soon as we are shown the fact behind the veil, and that everything which displeases our idealistic morality is classed by us as an exception, without taking into account that these exceptions all brought together constitute nearly the total number of cases. There further results from it that credulous good people like me are deceived by everybody, and especially by women, who have a talent in this direction.

"I have started far afield in order to come to the particular fact which interests me. I have a mistress, a married woman. Like many others, I imagined (do you understand?) that I had chanced on an exception, on an unhappy little woman who was deceiving her husband for the first time. I had paid attentions to her, or rather I had looked on myself as having paid attention to her for a long time, as having overcome her virtue by dint of kindness and love, and as having triumphed by the sheer force of perseverance. In fact, I had made use of a thousand devices, and a thousand subtle dallyings in order to succeed in getting the better of her.

"Now here is what happened last week:—Her husband being absent for some days, she suggested that we should both dine together, and that I should attend to myself so as to avoid the pres-

ence of a man-servant. She had a fixed idea which had haunted her for the last four or five months. She wanted to get tipsy, but to get tipsy together without being afraid of consequences, without having to go back home, speak to her chambermaid, and walk before witnesses. She had often obtained what she called a 'gay agitation' without going farther, and she had found it delightful. She then promised herself that she would get tipsy once, only once, but thoroughly so. She pretended at her own house that she was going to spend twenty-four hours with some friends near Paris, and she reached my abode just about dinner-time.

"A woman naturally ought not to get fuddled except when she has had too much champagne. She drinks a big glass of it fasting, and before the oysters arrive, she begins to ramble in her talk.

"We had a cold dinner prepared on a table behind me. It was enough for me to stretch out my arm to take the dishes or the plates, and I attended on myself as best I could while I listened to her chattering.

"She kept swallowing glass after glass, haunted by her fixed idea. She began by making me the recipient of meaningless and interminable confidences with regard to her sensations as a young girl. She went on and on, her eyes rather wandering, brilliant, her tongue untied, and her light ideas rolling themselves out endlessly like the blue telegraph-paper which is moved on without stopping by the bobbin and which keeps extending its length to the click of the electric apparatus which covers it with unknown words.

"From time to time she asked me :

" 'Am I tipsy?'

" 'No, not yet.'

"And she went on drinking.

"She was so in a little while, not so tipsy as to lose her senses, but tipsy enough to tell the truth, as it seemed to me.

"To her confidences as to her emotions while a young girl succeeded more intimate confidences as to her relations with her husband. She made them to me without restraint till she wearied me with them, under this pretext, which she repeated a hundred times: 'I can surely tell everything to you. To whom could I tell everything if it were not to you?' So I was made acquainted with all the habits, all the defects, all the bads and the most secret fancies of her husband.

"And by way of claiming my approval she asked: 'Isn't he a flat? Do you think he has taken a feather out of me? eh? So, the first time I saw you, I said to myself: 'Let me see! I like him, and I'll take him for my lover. It was then you began mashing me.'

"I must have presented an odd face to her eyes at that moment, for she could see it, tipsy though she was; and with great outbursts of laughter, she exclaimed: 'Ah! you big simpleton, you did go about it cautiously; but, when men pay attentions to us, you dear blockhead, you see we like it, and then they must make quick work of it, and not keep us waiting. A man must be a ninny not to understand, by a mere glance at us, that we mean 'Yes.' Ah! I believe I was waiting for you, you stupid! I did not know what to do in order to make you see that I was in a hurry. Oh! yes, flowers, verses, compliments, more verses, and nothing else at all! I was very near letting you go, my fine fellow, you were so long in making up your mind. And only to think that half the men in the world are like you, while the other half, ha! ah! ah!'

"This laugh of hers sent a cold shiver down my back. I stammered: 'The other half - what about the other half?'

"She still went on drinking, her eyes steeped in the fumes of sparkling wine, her mind impelled by the imperious necessity for telling the truth which sometimes takes possession of drunkards.

"She replied. 'Ah! the other half makes quick work of it--too quick; but, all the same, they are right. There are days when we don't hit it off with them; but there are days, too, when it all goes right, in spite of everything. . . . My dear, if you only knew how funny it is--the way the two kinds of men act! You see, the timid ones, such as you, you never could imagine what sort the others are and what they do, immediately, as soon as they find themselves alone with us. They are regular dare-devils! They got many a slap in the face from us, no doubt of that, but what does that matter? They knew we're the sort that kiss and don't tell! They know us well, they do!'

"I stared at her with the eyes of an inquisitor, and with a mad desire to make her speak, to learn everything from her. How often had I put this question to myself: 'How do the other men behave towards the women who belong to us?' I was fully conscious of the fact that, from the way I saw two men talking to the same woman publicly in a drawing-room, these two men, if they found themselves, one after the other, all alone with her, would conduct themselves quite differently, although they were both equally well acquainted with her. We can guess at the first glance of the eye that certain beings, naturally endowed with the power of seduction, or only more lively, more daring than we are, reach, after an hour's chat with a woman who pleases them, to a degree of intimacy to which we would not attain in a year. Well, do,

these men, these seducers, these bold adventurers, take, when the occasion presents itself to them, liberties with their hands and lips, which to us, the timid ones, would appear odious outrages, but which women perhaps look on merely as pardonable effrontery, as indecent homages to their irresistible grace?

"So I asked her. 'There are women, though, who think these men very improper?'

She threw herself back on her chair in order to laugh more at her case, but with a nerveless, unhealthily laugh, one of those laughs which ends in nervous fits, then, a little more calmly, she replied. 'Ha! ha! my dear, improper! that is to say, that they dare everything, at once, all, you understand, and many other things, too.'

"I felt myself horrified, as if she had just revealed to me a monstrous thing.

" 'And you permit this, you women?'

" 'No, we don't permit it; we slap them in the face, but, for all that, they amuse us! And then with them one is always afraid, one is never easy. You must keep watching them the whole time, it is like fighting a duel. You have to keep staring into their eyes to see what they are thinking of, or where they are putting their hands. They are blackguards, if you like, but they love us better than you do.'

"A singular and unexpected sensation stole over me. Although a bachelor, and determined to remain a bachelor, I suddenly felt in my breast the spirit of a husband in the face of this impudent confidence. I felt myself the friend, the ally, the brother of all these confiding men who are, if not robbed, at least defrauded by all the rufflers of woman's waists.

"It is this strange emotion, monsieur, that I am

obeying at this moment, in writing to you, and in begging of you to address a warning note to the great army of easy-going husbands.

"However, I had still some lingering doubts. This woman was drunk and must be lying.

"I went on to inquire: "How is it that you never relate these adventures to anyone, you women?"

"She gazed at me with profound pity, and with such an air of sincerity that, for the moment I thought she had been soberized by astonishment.

"We—But, my dear fellow, you are very foolish. Why do we never talk to you about these things? Ha! ha! ha! Does your valet tell you about his tips, his odd sous? Well, this is our little tip. The husband ought not to complain when we don't go farther. But how dull you are! To talk of these things would be to give the alarm to all ninnies! Ah! how dull you are! . . . And then what harm does it do as long as we don't yield?"

"I felt myself in a great state of great confusion as I put this question to her:

"So then you have often been embraced by men?"

"She answered, with an air of sovereign contempt for the man who could have any doubt on the subject:

"Faith!—Why, every woman has been embraced . . . Try it on with any of them, no matter whom, in order to see for yourself, you great goose! Look here! embrace Mme. de X! She is quite young, and quite virtuous. Embrace, my friend—embrace, and touch, you shall see, Ha! ha! ha!"

* * *

"All of a sudden she flung her glass straight at the chandelier. The champagne fell down in a shower, extinguished three wax-candles, stained

the hangings, and deluged the table, whilst the broken glass was scattered about the dining-room. Then, she made an effort to seize the bottle to do the same with it, but I prevented her. After that, she burst out crying in a very loud tone—the nervous fit had come on, as I had anticipated

"Some days later, I had almost forgotten this avowal of a tipsy woman when I chanced to find myself at an evening party with this Mme. de X.—— whom my mistress had advised me to embrace. As I lived in the same direction as she did, I offered to drive her to her own door, for she was alone this evening. She accepted my offer.

As soon as we were in the carriage, I said to myself: 'Come! I must try it on!' But I had not the courage. I did not know how to make a start, how to begin the attack.

"Then suddenly, the desperate courage of cowards came to my aid. I said to her: 'How pretty you were this evening.'

"She replied with a laugh: 'So then, this evening was an exception, since you only remarked it for the first time.'

"I did not know what rejoinder to make. Certainly my gallantry was not making progress. After a little reflection, however, I managed to say:

"'No, but I never dared to tell you.'

"She was astonished.

"'Why?'

"'Because it is—it is a little difficult'

"Difficult to tell a woman that she's pretty? Why, were did you come from? You should always tell us so, even when you only half think it,

... because it always gives us pleasure to hear

"I felt myself suddenly animated by a fantastical audacity, and, catching her round the waist, I raised my lips towards her mouth.

"Nevertheless I seemed to be rather nervous about it, and not to appear so terrible to her. I must also have arranged and executed my movement very badly, for she managed to turn her head aside so as to avoid contact with my face, saying :

"'Oh no—this is rather too much—too much You are too quick ! Take care of my hair. You cannot embrace a woman who has her hair dressed like mine ! I'

"I resumed my former position in the carriage, disconcerted, unnerved by this repulse. But the carriage drew up before her gate ; and she, as she stepped out of it, held out her hand to me, saying in her most gracious tones .

"Thanks, dear monsieur, for having seen me home and don't forget my advice !"

"I saw her three days later. She had forgotten everything

"And I, monsieur, I am incessantly thinking of the other sort of men—the sort of men to whom a lady's hair is no obstacle, and who know how to seize every opportunity

THE HORRIBLE.

THE shadows of a balmy night were slowly falling. The women remained in the drawing-room of the villa. The men, seated or astride on garden-chairs, were smoking in front of the door, forming a circle round a table laden with cups and wine-glasses.

Their cigars shone like eyes in the darkness, which, minute by minute, was growing thicker. They had been talking about a frightful accident which had occurred the night before—two men and three women drowned before the eyes of the guests in the river opposite.

General de G—— remarked :

"Yes, these things are affecting, but they are not horrible.

"The horrible, that well-known word, means much more than the terrible. A frightful accident like this moves, upsets, scares : it does not horrify. In order that we should experience horror, something more is needed than the excitation of the soul, something more than the spectacle of the dreadful death ; there must be a shuddering sense of mystery or a sensation of abnormal terror beyond the limits of nature. A man who dies, even in the most dramatic conditions, does not excite horror ; a field of battle is not horrible, blood is not horrible : the vilest crimes are rarely horrible.

"Hold on! here are two personal examples which have shown me what is the meaning of horror :

'It was during the war of 1870. We were retreating towards Pont-Audemer, after having passed through Rouen. The army, consisting of about twenty thousand men, twenty thousand men in disorder, disbanded, demoralised, exhausted, were going to reform at Havre.

"The earth was covered with snow. The night was falling. They had not eaten anything since the day before. They were flying rapidly, the Prussians not being far off.

All the Norman country, level, dotted with the shadows of the trees surrounding the farms, extended under a black sky, heavy and misty.

"Nothing else could be heard in the win twilight save the confused sound, soft and undefined, of a marching throng and endless trampling, mingled with the vague clink of pottinger or sabres. The men, bent, round shouldered, dirty, in many cases even in rags, dragged themselves along, hurried through the snow, with a long, broken backed stride.

"The skin of their hands stuck to the steel of their muskets' butt ends, for it was freezing dreadfully that night. I frequently saw a little soldier take off his shoes in order to walk barefooted, so much did his footgear bruise him, and with every step he left a little track of blood. Then, after some time, he sat down in a field for a few minutes' rest, and he never got up again. Every man who sat down was a dead man.

"Should we have left behind us those poor, exhausted soldiers, who fondly counted on being able to start afresh as soon as they had somewhat refreshed their stiffened legs? Now, scarcely had they ceased to move, and to make their almost frozen blood circulate in their veins, than an unconquerable torpor congealed them, nailed them to the ground, closed their eyes, and in one second collapsed this overworked human mechanism. And

they gradually sank down, their heads falling towards their knees, without, however, quite tumbling over, for their loins and their limbs lost their capacity for moving, and became as hard as wood, impossible to bend or to set upright.

"And the rest of us, more robust, we kept still straggling on, chilled to the marrow of our bones, advancing by dint of forced movement through that night, through that snow, through that cold and deadly country, crushed by pain, by defeat, by despair, above all, overcome by the abominable sensation of abandonment, of the end, of death, of nothingness."

"I saw two gendarmes holding by the arm a curious-looking little man, old, headless, of truly surprising aspect.

"They were looking out for an officer, believing that they caught a spy. The word "spy" at once spread through the midst of the strugglers, and they gathered in a group round the prisoner. A voice exclaimed: 'He must be shot!' And all these soldiers who were falling from utter prostration, only holding themselves on their feet by leaning on their guns, felt all of a sudden that thrill of furious and bestial anger which urges on a mob to massacre.

"I wanted to speak! I was at that time in command of a battalion; but they no longer recognised the authority of their commanding officer; they would have shot myself.

"One of the gendarmes said: 'He has been following us for the last three days. He has been asking information from everyone about the artillery.'

"I took it on myself to question this person.

"'What are you doing? What do you want? Why are you accompanying the army?'

"He stammered out some words in some unintelligible dialect. He was, indeed, a strange he-

ing, with narrow shoulders, a sly look, and such an agitated air in my presence that I had no longer any real doubt that he was a spy. He seemed very aged and feeble. He kept staring at me from under his eyes with humble, stupid, and crafty air.

"The men all round us exclaimed :

" 'To the wall ! to the wall !'

"I said to the gendarmes :

" 'Do you answer for the prisoner ?'

"I had not ceased speaking when a terrific push threw me on my back, and in a second I saw the man seized by the furious soldiers, thrown down, struck, dragged along the side of the road, and flung against a tree. He fell in the snow, nearly dead already.

"And immediately they shot him. The soldiers fired at him, re-loaded their guns, fired again with the desperate energy of brutes. They fought with each other to have a shot at him, filed off in front of the corpse, and kept firing at him, as people at a funeral keep sprinkling holy water in front of a coffin.

"But suddenly a cry arose of 'The Prussians ! the Prussians !'

"And all along the horizon I heard the great noise of this panic-stricken army in full flight.

"The panic, generated by these shots fired at this vagabond, had filled his very executioners with terror ; and, without realising that they were themselves the originators of the scare, rushed away and disappeared in the darkness.

"I remained alone in front of the corpse with the two gendarmes, whom their duty had compelled to stay with me.

"They lifted up the riddled piece of flesh bruised and bleeding.

" 'He must be examined,' I said to them

"And I handed them a box of vestas, which I

had in my pocket. One of the soldiers had another box. I was standing between the two.

"The gendarme, who was feeling the body, called out :

" 'Clothed in a blue blouse, a trousers, and a pair of shoes.'

"The first match went out; we lighted a second. The man went on, as he turned out his pockets.

" 'A horn knife, check handkerchief, a snuff-box a bit of patch-thread, a piece of bread.'

"The second match went out; we lighted a third. The gendarme, after having handled the corpse for a long time, said :

" 'That's all.'

"I said :

" 'Strip him. We shall perhaps find something near the skin.'

"And, in order that the two soldiers might help each other in this task, I stood between them to give them light. I saw them, by the rapid and speedily extinguished flash of the match, take off the garments one by one, and expose to view that bleeding bundle of flesh still warm, though lifeless.

"And suddenly one of them exclaimed :

" 'Good God, General. it is a woman!'

"I cannot describe to you the strange and poignant sensation of pain that moved my heart. I could not believe it, and I knelt down in the snow before the shapeless pulp of flesh to see for myself; it was a woman.

"The two gendarmes, speechless and stunned, waited for me to give my opinion on the matter. But I did not know what to think, what theory to adopt.

"Then the brigadier slowly drawled out :

" 'Perhaps she came to look for a son of hers in the artillery, whom she had not heard from.'

"And the other chimed in :

" 'Perhaps indeed that is so.'

"And I, who had seen some very terrible things in my time, began to cry. And I felt, in the presence of this corpse, in that icy cold night, the midst of that gloomy plain, at the sight of this mystery, at the sight of this murdered stranger, the meaning of that word 'Horror.'

"Now, I had the same sensation last year while interrogating one of the survivors of the Flatters Mission, an Algerian sharpshooter.

"You know the details of the atrocious drama. It is possible, however, that you are unacquainted with them.

"The Colonel travelled through the desert into the Soudan, and passed through the immense territory of the Touaregs, who are, in that great ocean of sand which stretches from the Atlantic to Egypt and from the Soudan to Algeria, a kind of pirates resembling those who ravaged the seas in former days.

"The guides who accompanied the column belonged to the tribe of Chanubaa, of Ouargla.

"Now, one day, they pitched their camp in the middle of the desert, and the Arabs declared that, as the spring was a little farther away, they would go with all their camels to look for water.

"Only one man warned the Colonel that he had been betrayed : Flatters did not believe this, and accompanied the convoy with the engineers, the doctors, and nearly all the officers.

"They were massacred round the spring, and all the camels captured.

"The Captain of the Arab Intelligence Department at Ouargla, who had remained in the camp,

took command of the survivors, spahis and sharpshooters, and they commenced the retreat, leaving behind the baggage and the provisions for want of camels to carry them.

"Then they started on their journey through this solitude without shade and without limits, under the devouring sun which burned them from morning till night.

"One tribe came to tender its submission and brought dates as a tribute. They were poisoned. Nearly all the French died, and, among them, the last officer.

"There only remained now a few spahis with their quartermaster, Pobequin, and some native sharpshooters of the Chambaa tribe. They had still two camels left. They disappeared one night along with two Arabs.

"Then the survivors understood that they were going to eat each other up, as soon as they discovered the flight of the two men with the two beasts, those who remained separated, and proceeded to march, one by one, through the soft sand, under the glare of a scorching sun, at a distance of more than a gunshot from each other.

"So they went on all day, and, when they reached a spring, each of them came to drink at it in turn as soon as each solitary marcher had moved forward the number of yards arranged upon. And thus they continued marching the whole day, raising, everywhere they passed, in that level burnt-up expanse, those little columns of dust which, at a distance, indicate those who are trudging through the desert.

"But, one morning, one of the travellers made a sudden turn, and drew nearer to his neighbour. And they all stopped to look.

"The man towards whom the famished soldier drew near did not fly, but lay flat on the ground, and took aim at the one who was coming on. When he believed he was within gunshot, he fired. The

other was not hit, and he continued then to advance, and cocking his gun in turn, killed his comrade.

"Then from the entire horizon, the others rushed to seek their share. And he who had killed the fallen man, cutting the corpse into pieces, distributed it.

"And they once more placed themselves at fixed distances, these irreconcilable allies, preparing for the next murder which would bring them together.

"For two days, they lived on this human flesh which they divided amongst each other. Then, the famine came back, and he who had killed the first man began killing afresh. And again, like a butcher, he cut up the corpse, and offered it to his comrades, keeping only his own portion of it.

"And so this retreat of cannibals continued.

"The last Frenchman, Pobeguin, was massacred at the side of a well, the very night before the supplies arrived.

"Do you understand now what I mean by the Horrible?"

This was the story told us a few nights ago by General de G-

A NEW YEAR'S GIFT.

JACQUES DE RANDAL, having dined at home alone, told his valet he might go, and then he sat down at a table to write his letters.

He thus finished every year by writing and dreaming. He made for himself a sort of review

of things that had happened since last New Year's Day, things that were now all over and dead; and, in proportion as the faces of his friends rose up before his eyes, he wrote them a few lines, a cordial "Good morning" on the 1st of January.

So he sat down, opened a drawer, took out of it a woman's photograph, gazed at it a few moments, and kissed it. Then, having laid it beside a sheet of notepaper, he began:--

"My dear Irene,--You must have by this time the little souvenir which I sent you. I have shut myself up this evening in order to tell you."

The pen here ceased to move. Jacques rose up and began walking up and down the room.

For the last six months he had a mistress, not a mistress like the others, a woman with whom one engages in a passing intrigue, of the theatric world or the "demi-monde," but a woman whom he loved and won. He was no longer a young man, although he was still comparatively young for a man, and he looked on life seriously in a positive and practical spirit.

Accordingly, he drew up the balance sheet of his passion, as he drew up every year the balance sheet of friendships that were ended or freshly contracted, of circumstances and persons that had entered into his life.

His first ardour of love having grown calmer, he asked himself, with the precision of a merchant making a calculation, what was the state of his heart with regard to her; and he tried to form an idea of what it would be in the future.

He found there a great and deep affection, made up of tenderness, gratitude, and the thousand subtle ties which gave birth to long and powerful attachments.

A ring at the bell made him start. He hesitated.

Would he open? But he said to himself that it was his duty to open on this New Year's night, to open to the Unknown who knocks while passing no matter whom it may be.

So he took a wax-candle, passed through the ante-chamber, removed the bolts, turned the key, drew the door back, and saw his mistress standing pale as a corpse, leaning against the wall.

He stammered :

"What is the matter with it?"

She replied :

"Are you alone?"

"Yes."

"Without servants?"

"Yes."

"Are you not going out?"

"No."

She entered with the air of a woman who knew the house. As soon as she was in the drawing-room, she sank into the sofa, and, covering her face with her hands, began to weep dreadfully.

He knelt down at her feet, seized hold of her hands to remove them from her eyes, so that he might look at them, and exclaim :

"Irene, Irene, what is the matter with you? I implore of you to tell me what is the matter with you?"

Then, in the midst of her sobs, she murmured .

"I can no longer live like this "

He did not understand.

"Live like this? What do you mean?"

"Yes. I can no longer live like this. . . . I have endured so much. . . . He struck me this afternoon."

"Who, your husband?"

"Yes, my husband."

"Ha!"

He was astonished, having never suspected that her husband could be so brutal. He was a man of the world, of the better class, a clubman, a lover of horses, a theatre goer, and an expert swordsman; he was known, talked about, appreciated everywhere, having very courteous manners, a very mediocre intellect, an absence of education and of the real culture needed in order to think like all well-bred people, and finally a respect for all conventional prejudices.

He appeared to devote himself to his wife, as a man ought to do in the case of wealthy and well-bred people. He displayed enough of anxiety about her wishes, her health, her dresses, and, beyond that, left her perfectly free.

Randal, having become Irene's friend, had a right to the affectionate hand-clasp which every husband endowed with good manners owes to his wife's intimate acquaintances. Then, when Jacques after having been for some time the friend, became the lover, his relations with the husband were more cordial, as is fitting.

Jacques had never dreamed that there were storms in this household, and he was seared at this unexpected revelation.

He asked :

"How did it happen? tell me."

Thereupon, she related a long history, the entire history of her life since the day of her marriage, the first discussion arising out of a mere nothing, then accentuating itself with all the estrangement which grows up each day between two opposite types of character.

Then came quarrels, a complete separation, not apparent, but real; next, her husband showed himself aggressive, suspicious, violent. Now, he was jealous, jealous of Jacques, and this day even, after a scene, he had struck her.

she added, with decision, "I will not go back to him. Do with me what you like."

Jacques sat down opposite to her, then knees touching each other. He caught hold of her hands:

"My dear love, you are going to commit a gross, an irreparable folly. If you want to quit your husband, put wrongs on one side, so that your situation as a woman of the world may be saved."

She asked, as she cast at him a restless glance.

"Then, what do you advise me?"

"To go back home and to put up with your life there till the day when you can obtain either a separation or a divorce, with the honours of war."

"Is not this thing which you advise me to do a little cowardly?"

"No; it is wise and reasonable. You have a high position, a reputation to safeguard, friends to preserve, and relations to deal with. You must not lose all these through a mere caprice."

She rose up, and said with violence:

"Well, no! I cannot have any more of it! It is at an end! it is at an end!"

Then, placing her two hands on her lover's shoulders, and looking at him straight in the face, she asked

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Really and truly?"

"Yes."

"Then keep me."

He exclaimed:

"Keep you? In my own house? Hic! Why, you are mad. It would mean losing you for ever: losing you beyond hope of recall! You are mad!"

She replied, slowly and seriously, like a woman who feels the weight of her words :

"Listen, Jacques. He has forbidden me to see you again, and I will not play this comedy of coming secretly to your house. You must either lose me or take me."

"My dear Henri, in that case, obtain your divorce, and I will marry you."

"Yes, you will marry me in—two years at the soonest. Yours is a patient love."

"Look here! Reflect! If you remain here, he'll come to-morrow to take you away, seeing that he is your husband, seeing that he has right and law on his side."

"I did not ask you to keep me in your own house, Jacques, but to take me anywhere you like. I thought you loved me enough to do that. I have made a mistake. Good-bye!"

She turned round, and went towards the door so quickly that he was only able to catch hold of her when she was outside the room.

"Listen, Henri."

She struggled, and did not want to listen to him any longer, her eyes full of tears, and with these words only on her lips :

"Let me alone! let me alone! let me alone!"

He made her sit down by force, and falling once more on his knees at her feet, he now brought forward a number of arguments and counsels to make her understand the folly and terrible risk of her project. He omitted nothing which he deemed it necessary to say to convince her, finding even in his very affection for her motives of persuasion.

As she remained silent and cold, he begged of her, implored of her to listen to him, to trust him, to follow his advice.

When he had finished speaking, she only replied:

"Are you disposed to let me go away now? Take away your hands, so that I may rise up."

"Look here, Irene."

"Will you let me go?"

"Irene . . . is your resolution irrevocable?"

"Do let me go."

"Tell me only whether this resolution, this foolish resolution of yours, which you will bitterly regret, is irrevocable?"

"Yes . . . let me go!"

"Then stay. You know well that you are at home here. We shall go away to-morrow morning."

She rose up in spite of him, and said in a hard tone:

"No. It is too late. I do not want sacrifice; I do not want devotion."

"Stay! I have done what I ought to do; I have said what I ought to say. I have no further responsibility on your behalf. My conscience is at peace. Tell me what you want me to do, and I will obey."

She resumed her seat, looked at him for a long time, and then asked, in a very calm voice:

"Explain, then."

"How is that? What do you wish me to explain?"

"Everything—everything that you have thought about before coming to this resolution. Then I will see what I ought to do."

"But I have thought about nothing at all. I ought to warn you that you are going to accomplish an act of folly. You persist; then I ask to share in this act of folly, and I even insist on it."

"It is not natural to ~~change~~ ^{change} one's opinions so quickly."

"Listen, my dear love. It is not a question of sacrifice or devotion. On the day when I realised that I loved you, I said this to myself, which every lover ought to say to himself in the same case:--'The man who loves a woman, who makes an effort to win her, who gets her, and who takes her, contracts so far as he is himself, and so far as she is concerned, a sacred engagement. It is, mark you, a question of dealing with a woman like you, and not with a woman of an impulsive and yielding disposition'

"Marriage, which has a great social value, a great legal value, possesses in my eyes only a very slight moral value, taking into account the conditions under which it generally takes place.

"Therefore, when a woman, united by this lawful bond, but having no attachment to her husband, whom she cannot love, a woman whose heart is free, meets a man whom she cares for, and gives herself to him, when a man who has no other tie, takes a woman in this way, I say they pledge themselves towards each other by this mutual and free agreement much more than by the 'Yes' uttered in the presence of the Mayor's eash.

"I say that, if they are both honourable persons, their union must be more intimate, more real, more healthy, than if all the sacraments had consecrated it.

"This woman risks everything. And it is exactly because she knows it, because she gives everything, her heart, her body, her soul, her honour, her life, because she has foreseen all miseries, all dangers, all catastrophies, because she is prepared, determined to brave everything—her husband who might kill her, and society which may cast her out. This is why she is respectable in her conjugal infidelity, this is why her lover,

in taking her, must also have foreseen everything, and preferred her to everything whatever may happen. I have nothing more to say. I spoke in the beginning like a man of sense, whose duty it was to warn you; and now there is left in me only one man—the man who loves you. Say, then, what I am to do!”

Radiant, she closed his mouth with her lips; she said to him in a low tone:

“It is not true, darling! There is nothing the matter! My husband does not suspect anything. But I wanted to see, I wanted to know, what you would do. I wished for a New Year's gift—the gift of your heart—another gift besides the necklace you have sent me. You have given it to me. Thanks! thanks! God be thanked for the happiness you have given me!”

BESIDE A DEAD MAN.

HE was slowly dying, as consumptives die. I saw him sitting down every day at two o'clock under the windows of the hotel, facing the tranquil sea on an open-air bench. He remained for some time without moving, in the heat of the sun, gazing mournfully, at the Mediterranean. Every now and then, he cast a glance at the lofty mountains with vaporous summits which shuts in Mentone; then, with a very slow movement, he crossed his long legs, so thin that they seemed two bones, around which fluttered the cloth of his trousers, and he opened a book, which was always the same. And then he did not stir any more, but read on with his eye and his mind: all his ex-

piring body seemed to read, all his soul plunged, lost itself, disappeared, in this book, up to the hour when the cool air made him cough a little. Then, he got up and re-entered the hotel.

He was a tall German, with fair beard, who breakfasted and dined in his own room, and spoke to nobody.

A vague curiosity attracted me to him. One day I sat down by his side, having taken up a book, too, to keep up appearances, a volume of Musset's poems.

And I began to run through "Rolla."

Suddenly, my neighbour said to me, in good French :

"Do you know German, monsieur?"

"Not at all, monsieur."

"I am sorry for that. Since chance has thrown us side by side, I could have lent you, I could have shown you, an inestimable thing—this book which I hold in my hand."

"What is it, pray?"

"It is a copy of my master, Schopenhauer, annotated with his own hand. All the margins, as you may see, are covered with his handwriting."

I took the book from him reverently, and I gazed at those forms incomprehensible to me, but which revealed the immortal thought of the greatest shatterer of dreams who had ever dwelt on earth.

And Musset's verses arose in my memory :

"Hast thou found out, Voltaire, that it is bliss
to die,
Or does thy hideous smile over thy bleached bones
fly?"

And involuntarily I compared the childish sarcasm, the religious sarcasm, of Voltaire with the irresistible irony of the German philosopher, whose influence is henceforth ineffacable.

Let us protest, and let us be angry, let us be

indignant, or let us be enthusiastic, Schopenhauer has marked humanity with the seal of disdain and of disenchantment.

A disabused pleasure-seeker, he overthrows beliefs, hopes, poetic ideal, and chimeras, destroyed the aspirations, ravaged the confidence of souls, killed love, dragged down the chivalrous worship of women, crushed the illusions of the hearts and accomplished the most gigantic task ever attempted by scepticism. He passed over everything with his mocking spirit, and left everything empty. And even to-day those who execrate him seem to carry portions of his thought, in spite of themselves, in their own souls.

"So, then, you were intimately acquainted with Schopenhauer?" I said to the German.

He smiled sadly.

"Up to the time of his death, monsieur."

And he spoke to me about the philosopher and told me about the almost supernatural impression which this strange being made on all who came near him.

He gave me an account of the interview of the old iconoclast with a French politician, a doctrinaire Republican, who wanted to get a glimpse of this man, and found him in a noisy tavern, seated in the midst of his disciples, dry, wrinkled, laughing with an unforgettable laugh, eating and tearing ideas and beliefs with a single word, as a dog tears with one bite of his teeth the tissues with which he plays.

He repeated for me the comment of this French man as he went away, scared and terrified:—"I thought I had spent an hour with the devil."

Then he added:

"He had, indeed, monsieur, a frightful smile which terrified us even after his death. I can tell you an anecdote about it not generally known, if it has any interest to you."

And he began, in a tired voice, interrupted by frequent fits of coughing :

"Schopenhauer had just died, and it was arranged that we should watch, in turn, two by two, till morning.

"He was lying in a large apartment, very simple, vast, and gloomy. Two wax-candles were burning on the bedside stand.

It was midnight when I took up my task of watching along with one of our comrades. The two friends whom we replaced had left the apartment, and we came and set down at the foot of the bed.

"The face was not changed. It was laughing. That pucker which we knew so well lingered still around the corners of the lips, and it seemed to us that he was about to open his eyes, to move, and to speak. His thought, or rather his thoughts, enveloped us. We felt ourselves more than ever in the atmosphere of his genius, absorbed, possessed by him. His domination seemed to be even more sovereign now that he was dead. A sense of mystery was blended with the power of this incomparable spirit.

"The bodies of these men disappear, but they remain themselves; and in the night which follows the stoppage of their heart's beatings, I assure you, monsieur, they are terrifying.

"And in hushed tones we talked about him, recalling to mind certain sayings, certain formulas of his, those startling maxims which are like jets of flame flung, by means of some words, into the darkness of the Unknown Life.

"It seems to me that he is going to speak," said my comrade. And we stared with uneasiness, bordering on fear at the motionless face with its eternal laugh. Gradually, we began to feel ill at ease, oppressed, on the point of fainting. I faltered :

"I don't know what is the matter with me, but, I assure you, I am not well."

And at that moment we noticed that there was unpleasant labour from the corpse.

"Then my comrade suggested that we should go into the adjoining room, and leave the door open; and I assented to his proposal.

"I took one of the wax-candles, which burned on the bedside stand, and I left the second behind. Then we went and sat down at the other end of the adjoining apartment, so as to be able to see from where we were the bed and the corpse, clearly revealed by the light.

"But he still held possession of us. One would have thought that his immaterial essence, liberated free, all-powerful and dominating, was sitting around us. And sometimes, too, the dreadful smell of the decomposed body came towards us and penetrated us, sickening and indefinable.

"Suddenly a shiver passed through our bones: a sound, a slight sound, came from the death-chamber. Immediately we fixed our glances on him, and we saw, yes, monsieur, we saw distinctly, both of us, something white flying over the bed, falling on the carpet, and vanishing under an armchair.

"We were on our feet before we had time to think of anything, distracted by stupefying terror, ready to run away. Then we stared at each other. We were horribly pale. Our hearts throbbed so fiercely that our clothes swelled over our chests. I was the first to speak

"You saw?"

"Yes, I saw?"

"Can it be that he is not dead?"

"Why not, when the body is putrefying?"

"What are we to do?"

"My companion said in a hesitating tone:

" 'We must go and look.' "

I took our wax-candle, and I entered first, searching with my eye through all the large apartment with its dark corners. There was not the least movement now, and I approached the bed. But I stood transfixed with stupor and fright. Schopenhauer was no longer laughing! He was grinning in a horrible fashion, with his lips pressed together and deep hollows in his cheeks. I stammered out:

" 'He's not dead! ' "

But the terrible odour arose up to my nose and stifled me. And I no longer moved, but kept staring fixedly at him, scared as it is in the presence of the apparition.

Then my companion, having seized the other wax-candle, bent forward. Then, he touched my arm without uttering a word. I followed his glance, and I saw on the ground, under the armchair by the side of the bed, all white on the dark carpet, open, as it to bite, Schopenhauer's set of artificial teeth.

"The work of decomposition, loosening the jaws, had made it jump out of the mouth."

"I was really frightened that day, monsieur."

And as the sun was sinking towards the glittering sea, the consumptive German rose from his seat, gave me a parting bow, and retired into the hotel.

AFTER

MY darlings," said the Countess, "you must go to bed."

The three children, two girls and a boy, rose up, and went to kiss their grandmother.

Then they came to say "Good night" to M. le

Cure, who had dined at the chateau, as he did every Thursday.

The Abbe Mauduit put two of the young ones sitting on his knees, passing his long arms clad in black behind the children's necks; and, drawing their heads towards him with a paternal movement, he kissed each of them on the forehead with a long, tender kiss.

Then, he again set them down on the ground, and the little being went off, the boy in front, and the girls behind.

"You are fond of children, M. le Cure," said the Comtesse.

"Very fond, Madame."

The old woman raised her bright eyes towards the priest.

"And—has your solitude never weighed too heavily on you?"

"Yes, sometimes."

He became silent, hesitated, and then added:—"But I was never made for ordinary life."

"What do you know about it?"

"Oh! I know very well. I was made to be a priest; I followed my own path."

The Comtesse kept staring at him:

"Look here, M. le Cure, tell me this—tell me how it was you resolved to renounce for ever what makes us love life—the rest of us—all that consoles and sustains us? What is it that drove you, impelled you, to separate yourself from the great natural path of marriages and the family. You are neither an enthusiast nor a fanatic, neither a gloomy person nor a sad person. Was it some strange occurrence, some sorrow, that led you to take life-long vows?"

The Abbe Mauduit rose up and advanced towards

the fire, then drew towards the flames the big shoes such as country priests generally wear. He seemed still hesitating as to what reply he should make.

He was a tall, old man with white hair, and for the last twenty years he had been the pastor of the parish of Sainte-Antoine-du-Rocher. The peasants said of him: "There's a good man for you!" And indeed he was a good man, benevolent, friendly to all, gentle, and, to crown all, generous. Like Saint Martin, he had cut his cloak in two. He freely laughed, and wept too for very little, just like a woman—a thing that prejudiced him more or less in the hard minds of the country people.

The old Comtesse de Saville, living in retirement in her chateau of Rocher, in order to bring up her grandchildren, after the successive deaths of her son and her son-in-law, was very much attached to her cure, and used to say of him: "He has a good heart!"

He came every Thursday to spend the evening at the chateau, and they were close friends, with the open and honest friendship of old people.

She persisted

"Look here, M. le Cure! 'tis your turn now to make a confession!"

He repeated: "I was not made for a life like everybody else. I saw it myself fortunately in time, and I have had many proofs since that I had made no mistake on the point."

My parents, who were merchants in Verdun, and rather rich, had much ambition on my account. They sent me to a boarding-school while I was very young. You cannot conceive what a boy may suffer at college, by the mere fact of separation, of isolation. This monotonous life without affection is good for some, and detestable for others. Young people have often hearts more sensitive

than one supposes, and by shutting them up thus too soon far from those they love, we may develop to an excessive extent a sensibility which is of an overstrung kind, and which becomes sickly and dangerous.

'I scarcely ever played; I never had companions. I passed my hours in looking back to my home, with regret, I spent the whole night weeping in my bed. I sought to bring up before my mind recollections of my own home, trifling recollections of little things, little events. I thought incessantly of all I had left behind there. I became almost imperceptibly an over sensitive youth to whom the slightest annoyances were dreadful griefs.

Together with this I remained taciturn, self-absorbed, without expansion, without confidants. This work of mental exaltation was brought about obscurely but surely. The nerves of children are quickly excited, one ought to have regard to the fact that they live in a state of deep quiet once up to the time of their almost complete development. But does anyone reflect that, for certain students, an unjust imposition can be as great a pang as the death of a friend afterwards? Does anyone render an exact account to himself of the fact that certain young souls live with very little cause, terrible emotions, and are in a very short time diseased and incurable souls?

"This was my case. This faculty of regret developed itself in me in such a fashion that my existence became a martyrdom.

"I did not speak about it. I said nothing about it, but gradually I acquired a sensibility, or rather a sensitivity so lively, that soul resembled a living wound. Everything that touched it produced in it twitchings of pain, frightful vibrations, and, consequently, true ravages. Happy

are the men whom nature has buttressed with indifference and armed with stoicism.

"I reached my sixteenth year. An excessive timidity had come to me from this aptitude to suffer on account of everything. Feeling myself unprotected against all the attacks of chance or fate, I feared every contact, every approach, every event. I lived on the watch as if under the constant threat of an unknown and always expected misfortune. I did not feel enough of boldness either to speak or to act publicly. I had, indeed, the sensation that life is a battle, a dreadful conflict in which one receives terrible blows, grievous, mortal wounds. In place of cherishing, like all men, the hope of good-fortune on the morrow, I only kept a confused fear of it, and I felt in my own mind a desire to conceal myself to avoid that contact in which I would be vanquished and slain.

"As soon as my studies were finished, they gave me six month's time to choose a career. A very simple event made me see clearly, all of a sudden, into myself, showed me the diseased condition of my mind, made me understand the danger, and caused me to make up my mind to fly from it.

"Verdiers is a little town surrounded with plains and woods. In the central street stands my parents' house. I now passed my days far from this dwelling, which I had so much regretted, and so much desired. Dreams were awakened in me, and I walked all alone in the fields in order to let them escape and fly away. My father and my mother, quite occupied with business, and anxious about my future, talked to me only about their profits or about my possible plans. They were fond of me in the way that hard-headed, practical people are; they had more reason than heart in their affection for me. I lived imprisoned in my thoughts, and trembling with my eternal uneasiness.

"Now, one evening, after a long walk, I saw,

as I was making my way home with great strides so as not to be late, a dog trotting towards me. He was a species of red spaniel, very lean, with long, curly ears.

"When he was ten paces away from me he stopped, I did the same. Then he began wagging his tail, and came over to me with short steps and nervous movements of his whole body, going down on his paws as if appealing to me, and softly shaking his head. He then made a show of crawling with an air so humble, so sad, so suppliant, that I felt the tears coming into my eyes. I came near him; he ran away, then he came back again; and I bent down, trying to coax him to approach me with soft words. At last, he was within reach of my hands, and I gently caressed him with the most careful touch.

"He grew bold, rose up bit by bit, laid his paws on my shoulders, and began to lick my face. He followed me into the house.

"This was really the first being I had passionately loved, because he returned my affection. My attachment to this animal was certainly exaggerated and ridiculous. It seemed to me, in a confused sort of way, that we were two brothers, lost on this earth, and, therefore, isolated and without defence, one as well as the other. He never again quitted my side. He slept at the foot of my bed, ate at the table in spite of the opposition of my parents, and he followed me in my solitary walks.

"I often stopped at the side of a ditch, and I sat down in the grass. Sam immediately rushed up, fell asleep on my knees, and lifted up my hand with the end of his snout so that I might caress him.

"One day, towards the end of June, as we were on the road from Saint-Pierre-de-Chavrol, I saw the diligence from Pavereau coming along. Its four horses were going at a gallop, with its yellow box-

seat, and imperial crowned with black leather. The coachman cracked his whip; a cloud of dust rose up under the wheels of the heavy vehicle, then floated behind, just as a cloud would do.

'And, all of a sudden, as the vehicle came close to me, Sam, perhaps frightened by the noise and wishing to join me, jumped in front of it. A horse's foot knocked him down. I saw him rolling over, turning round, falling back again on all fours, and then the entire coach gave two big shakes, and behind it I saw something quivering in the dust on the road. He was nearly cut in two; all his intestines were hanging through his stomach, which had been ripped open, and fell in spurts of blood to the ground. He tried to get up, to walk, but he could only move his two front paws, and scratch the ground with them, as if to make a hole. The two others were already dead. And he howled dreadfully, mad with pain.

"He died in a few minutes. I cannot describe how much I felt and suffered. I was confined to my own room for a month.

"Now, one night, my father, enraged at seeing me in such a state for so little, exclaimed:

"How then will it be when you have real griefs -- if you lose your wife or children?

"And I began to see clearly into myself. I understood why all the small miseries of each day assumed in my eyes the importance of a catastrophe. I saw that I was organised in such a way that I suffered dreadfully from everything, that every painful impression was multiplied by my diseased sensibility, and an atrocious fear of life took possession of me. I was without passions, without ambitions: I resolved to sacrifice possible joys in order to avoid sure sorrows. Existence is short, but I made up my mind to spend it in the service of others, in relieving their troubles and enjoying their happiness. By having no direct experience

of either one or the other. I would only be conscious of passionless emotions.

"And if you only knew how, in spite of this, misery tortures me, ravages me! But what would be for me an intolerable affliction has become commiseration, pity.

"These sorrows which I have every day to concern myself about I could not endure if they fell on my heart. I could not have seen one of my children die without dying myself. And I have, in spite of everything, preserved such an obscure and penetrating fear of circumstances, that the sight of the postman entering my house makes a shiver pass every day through my veins, and yet I have nothing to be afraid of now."

The Abbe Manduit ceased speaking. He stared into the fire in the huge grate, as if he saw there mysterious things, all the unknown portion of existence which he would have been able to live if he had been more fearless in the face of suffering.

He added, then, in a subdued tone :

"I was right. I was not made for this world."

The Comtesse said nothing at first; but at length, after a long silence, she remarked :

"For my part, if I had not my grandchildren, I believe I would not have the courage to live."

And the cure rose up without saying another word.

As the servants were asleep in the kitchen, she conducted him herself to the door, which looked out on the garden, and she saw his tall shadow lit up by the reflection of the lamp disappearing through the gloom of night.

Then she came back and sat down before the fire, and she pondered over many things on which we never think when we are young.

A QUELLE NIGHT IN PARIS

MAITRE SAVAL, notary at Vernon, was passionately fond of music. Still young, though already bald, always carefully shaved, a little corpulent, as it was fitting, wearing a gold piece-cut instead of old-fashioned spectacles, active, gallant, and joyous, he passed in Vernon as an artist. He thrummed on the piano and played on the violin, and gave musical evenings where interpretations were given of new operas.

He had even what is called a bit of a voice—nothing but a bit, a very little bit of a voice—but he managed it with so much taste that cries of "Bravo!" "Exquisite!" "Surprising!" "Adorable!" issued from every throat as soon as he had murmured the last note.

He was a subscriber to a music-publisher in Paris, who addressed new pieces to him, and he sent from time to time to the high society of the town, little notes something in this style:

"You are invited to be present on Monday evening at the house of M. Saval, notary, Vernon, at the first production of 'Sals.'"

A few officers, gifted with good voices, formed the chorus. Two or three of the 'vine-dressers' fancies also sang. The notary filled the part of leader of the orchestra with so much correctness that the bandmaster of the 100th regiment of the line said to him one day, at the Café de l'Europe:

"Oh! M. Saval is a master. It is a great pity that he did not adopt the career of an artist."

When his name was mentioned in a drawing room there was always somebody found to declare: "He is not an amateur, he is an artist, a genuine artist."

And two or three persons repeated, in a tone of profound conviction —

"Oh! yes, a genuine artist," laying particular stress on the word "genuine."

Just at the time that a new work was interpreted at a big Parisian theatre, M. Savat paid a visit to the capital.

Now, just as it, according to his custom, he went to hear "Henri VIII." He took the express which arrives in Paris at 4.30 p.m., intending to return by the 12.35 a.m. train, so as not to have to sleep at a hotel. He had put on evening dress, a black coat and white tie, which he concealed under his overcoat with the collar turned up.

As soon as he planted his foot on the Rue d'Amsterdam, he felt himself in quite jovial mood. He said to himself —

"Decidedly the air of Paris does not resemble any other air. It has in it something indescribably stimulating, exciting, intoxicating, which fills you with a strange longing to gambol and to do many other things. As soon as I arrive here, it seems to me, all of a sudden, that I have taken a bottle of champagne. What a life one can lead in this city in the midst of artists! Happy are the elect, the great men who enjoy renown in such a city! What an existence is theirs!"

And he made plans, he would have liked to know some of the celebrated men, to talk about them in Verdon, and to spend an evening with them from time to time in Paris.

But suddenly an idea struck him. He had heard allusions to little cafes in the outer boulevards at

which well-known painters, men of letters, and even musicians, gathered, and he proceeded to go up to Montmartre at a slow pace.

He had two hours before him. He wanted to have a look-round. He passed in front of taverns frequented by belated Bohemians gazing at the different faces, seeking to discover the artists. Finally, he came to the sign of "The Dead Rat," and allured by the name, he entered.

Five or six women, with their elbows resting on the marble tables, were talking in low tones about their love affairs, the quarrels of Lucie and Hortense, and the scoundrelism of Octave. They were no longer young, too fat and too thin, tired out, used up. You could see that they were almost bald; and they drank hocks like men.

M. Saval sat down at some distance from them, and waited for the hour for taking absinthe was at hand.

A tall young man soon came in and took a seat beside him. The landlady called him M. "Romantique." The notary quivered. Was this the Romantique who had taken a medal at the last Salon?

The young man made a sign to the waiter:—

"You will bring up my dinner at once, and then carry to my new studio, 15, Boulevard de Clichy, thirty bottles of beer and the ham I ordered this morning. We are going to have housewarming."

M. Saval immediately ordered dinner. Then, he took off his overcoat, so that his dress coat and his white tie could be seen. His neighbour did not seem to notice him. He had taken up a newspaper, and was reading it. M. Saval glanced sideways at him, burning with the desire to speak to him.

Two young men entered, in red vests, and peaked beards in the fashion of Henry III. They sat down opposite Romantique.

The first of the pair said :—

"It is for this evening?"

Romantin pressed his hand.

"I believe you, old chap, and everyone will be there. I have Bonnat, Guillemet, Gervex, Beraud, Herbert, Duez, Clairin, and Jean-Paul Laurens. It will be a glorious blow out! And women too! Wait till you see! Every actress without exception—of course I mean, you know, all those who have nothing to do this evening."

The landlord of the establishment came across.

"Do you often have this housewarming?"

The painter replied :—

"I believe you, every three months, each quarter."

M. Saval could not restrain himself any longer, and in a hesitating voice said :—

"I beg your pardon for intruding on you, monsieur, but I heard your name pronounced, and I would be very glad to know if you are really M. Romantin, whose work in the last Salon I have so much admired."

The painter answered :

"I am the very person, monsieur."

The notary then paid the artist a very well-turned compliment, showing that he was a man of culture.

The painter, gratified, thanked him politely in reply.

Then they chatted. Romantin returned to the subject of his housewarming, going into details as to the magnificence of the forthcoming entertainment.

M. Saval questioned him as to all the men he was going to receive, adding :—

"It would be an extraordinary piece of good fortune for a stranger to meet at one time so many

celebrities assembled in the studio of an artist of your rank."

Romantin, overcome, answered :—

"If it would be agreeable to you, come."

M. Saval accepted the invitation with enthusiasm, reflecting :—

"I'll always have time enough to see "Henri VIII."

Both of them had finished their meal. The notary insisted on paying the two bills, wishing to repay his neighbour's civilities. He also paid for the drinks of the young fellows in red velvet ; then he left the establishment with the painter.

They stopped in front of a very long house, by no means high, of which all the first storey had the appearance of an interminable conservatory. Six studios stood in a row with their fronts facing the boulevards.

Romantin was the first to enter, and, ascending the stairs, he opened a door, and lighted a match and then a candle.

They found themselves in an immense apartment, the furniture of which consisted of three chairs, two easels, and a few sketches lying on the ground along the walls. M. Saval remained standing at the door in a stupified state of mind.

The painter remarked :—

"Here you are ! we've got to the spot ; but everything has yet to be done."

Then, examining the high, bare apartment, whose ceiling was veiled in shadows, he said :—

"We might make a great deal out of this studio."

He walked round it, surveying it with the utmost attention, then went on :—

"I have a mistress who might easily give a helping hand. Women are incomparable for hanging drapery. But I sent her to the country for to-day, in order to get her off my hands this evening. It

is not that she bores me, but she is too much lacking in the ways of good society. It would be embarrassing to my guests."

He reflected for a few seconds, and then added :—

"She is a good girl, but not easy to deal with. If she knew that I was holding a reception, she would tear out my eyes."

M. Saval had not even moved; he did not understand.

The artist came over to him.

"Since I have invited you, you are going to give me some help."

The notary said emphatically :—

"Make any use of me you please. I am at your disposal."

Romantin took off his jacket.

"Well, citizen, to work! We are first going to clean up."

He went to the back of the easel, on which there was a canvass representing a cat, and seized a very worn-out broom.

"I say! Just brush up while I look after the lighting."

M. Saval took the broom, inspected it, and then began to sweep the floor very awkwardly, raising a whirlwind of dust.

Romantin, disgusted, stopped him :—"Deuce take it! you don't know how to sweep a floor! Look at me!"

And he began to roll before him a heap of greyish sweeping, as if he had done nothing else all his life. Then he gave back the broom to the notary, who imitated him.

In five minutes, such a cloud of dust filled the studio that Romantin asked :—

"Where are you? I can't see you any longer."

M. Saval, who was coughing, came near to him. The painter said to him :—

"How are you going to manage to get up a chandelier?"

The other, stunned, asked :—

"What chandelier?"

"Why, a chandelier to light a chandelier with wax-candles."

The notary did not understand.

The painter began to jump about, cracking his fingers.

"Well, monseigneur, I have found a way."

Then he went on more calmly :—

"Have you got five francs, about you?"

M. Saval replied :—

"Why, yes."

The artist said :—

"Well, you'll go and buy for me five francs' worth of wax-candles while I go and see the cooper."

And he pushed the notary in his evening coat into the street. At the end of five minutes, they had returned, one of them with the wax-candles, and the other with the hoop of a cask. Then Romantin plunged his hand into a cupboard, and drew forth twenty empty bottles, which he fixed in the form of a crown around the hoop.

He then came down, and went to borrow a ladder from the door-keeper, after having explained that he had obtained the favours of the old woman by painting the portrait of her cat exhibited on the easel.

When he mounted the ladder, he said to M. Saval :—

"Are you active?"

The other, without understanding, answered :—

"Why, yes."

"Well, you just climb up there, and fasten this

chandelier for me to the ring of the ceiling. Then you must put a wax candle in each bottle, and light it. I tell you I have a genius for lighting up. But off with your coat, damn it! You are just like a Jeanne."

The door was opened brutally. A woman appeared, with her eyes flashing, and remained standing on the threshold.

Romantini gazed at her with a look of terror.

She waited some seconds, crossing her arms over her breast, and then, in a shrill, vibrating, exasperated voice, said —

"Ha! you snotty nose, is this the way you leave me?"

Romantini made no reply. She went on. —

"Ha! you scoundrel! You are again doing the swell, while you pack me off to the country. You'll soon see the way I'll settle your jollifications. Yes, I'm going to receive your friends."

She grew warmer. —

"I'm going to slap their faces with the bottles and the wax-candles."

Romantini uttered one soft word. —

"Mathilde."

But she did not pay any attention to him, she went on. —

"Wait a little, my fine fellow! wait a little!"

Romantini went over to her, and tried to take her by the hands. —

"Mathilde."

But she was now fairly under way, and on she went, emptying the vials of her wrath with strong words and reproaches. They flowed out of her mouth, like a stream sweeping a heap of filth along with it. The words hurried out, seemed struggling for exit. She stammered, stammered, yelled, suddenly recovering her voice to cast forth an insult or a curse.

He seized her hands without her having even noticed it. She did not seem to see anything, so much occupied was she in holding forth and relieving her heart. And suddenly she began to weep. The tears flowed from her eyes without making her stem the tide of her complaints. But her words had taken a howling, shrieking tone; they were a continuous cry, interrupted by sobbings. She commenced afresh twice or three times, till she stopped as if something were choking her, and at last she ceased with a regular flood of tears.

Then he clasped her in his arms and kissed her hair, affected himself.

"Mathilde, my little Mathilde, listen. You must be reasonable. You know, if I give a supper-party to my friends, it is to thank these gentlemen for the medal I got at the Salon. I can not receive women. You ought to understand that. It is not the same with artists, as with other people."

She stammered in the midst of her tears:—

"Why didn't you tell me this?"

He replied:—

"It was in order not to annoy you, not to give you pain. Listen, I'm going to see you home. You will be very sensible, very nice; you will remain quietly waiting for me in bed, and I'll come back as soon as it's over."

She murmured:—

"Yes, but you will not begin over again?"

"No, I swear to you!"

He turned towards M. Saval, who had at last hooked on the chandelier:—

"My dear friend, I am coming back in five minutes. If any one arrives in my absence, do the honours for me, will you not?"

And he turned off Mathilde, who kept drying her eyes with her handkerchief as she went along.

Left to himself, M. Savat succeeded in putting everything around him in order. Then he lighted the wax candles, and waited.

He waited for a quarter of an hour, half an hour, an hour. Romantin did not return. Then, suddenly, there was a dreadful noise on the stairs, a song shouted out in chorus by twenty mouths, and a regular march like that of a Prussian regiment. The whole house was shaken by the steady tramp of feet. The door flew open, and a motly throng appeared, men and women in a row, holding one another arm in arm, in pairs, kicking their heels on the ground, in proper time, advanced into the studio, like a snake uncoiling itself. They howled —

“Come, and let us all be merry,
Pretty maids and soldiers gay!”

M. Savat, thunderstruck, remained standing in evening dress under the chandelier. The procession of revellers caught sight of him, and uttered a shout.

“A Jeames! A Jeames!”

And they began whirling round him, surrounding him with a cluck of vociferations. Then they took each other by the hand and went dancing about madly.

He attempted to explain —

“Messieurs—messieurs mesdames —”

But they did not listen to him. They whirled about, they jumped, they brawled.

At last the dancing ceased. M. Savat uttered the word —

“Messieurs—”

A tall young fellow, fair-haired and bearded to the nose, interrupted him:—

"What's your name, my friend?"

The notary, quite scared, said:—

"I am M. Saval."

A voice exclaimed:—

"You mean Baptiste."

A woman said:—

"Let the poor waiter alone! You'll end by making him get angry. He's paid to attend on us, and not to be laughed at by us."

Then, M. Saval noticed that each guest had brought his own provisions. One held a bottle of wine, and the other a pie. This one had a loaf of bread, and one a ham.

The tall, fair young fellow placed in his hands an enormous sausage, and gave orders:—

"I say! Go and settle up the sideboard in the corner over there. You are to put the bottles at the left and the provisions on the right."

Saval, getting quite distracted:—

"But, messieurs, I am a notary!"

There was a moment's silence, and then a wild outburst of laughter. One suspicious gentleman asked:—

"How are you here?"

He explained, telling about his project of going to the Opera, his departure from Vernon, his arrival in Paris, and the way in which he had spent the evening.

They sat around him to listen to him. They greeted him with words of applause, and called him Scheherazade.

Romantin did not come back. Other guests arrived. M. Saval was presented to them so that he might begin his story over again. He declined; they forced him to relate it. They fixed him on one of three chairs between two women, who kept constantly filling his glass. He drank; he laughed; he talked; he sang too. He tried to waltz with his chair, and fell on the ground.

From that moment he forgot everything. It seemed to him, however, that they undressed him, put him to bed, and that his stomach got sick.

When he awoke, it was broad daylight, and he lay stretched with his feet against a cupboard, in a strange bed.

An old woman with a broom in her hand was glaring angrily at him. At last she said:—

"Clear out, you blackguard! Clear out! What right has anyone to get drunk like this?"

He sat up in bed, feeling very ill at ease. He asked:—

"Where am I?"

"Where are you, you dirty scamp? You are drunk. Take your rotten carcase out of here as quick as you can and lose no time about it!"

He wanted to get up. He found that he was naked in the bed. His clothes had disappeared. He blurted out:—

"Madame, I——"

Then he remembered What was he to do? He asked:—

"Did Monsieur Romantin come back?"

The door-keeper shouted:—

"Will you take your dirty carcase out of this so that he at any rate may not catch you here?"

M. Saval said, in a state of confusion:—

"I haven't got my clothes; they have been taken away from me."

He had to wait, to explain his situation, give notice to his friends, and borrow some money to buy clothes. He did not leave Paris till evening.

And when people talk about music to him in his beautiful drawing-room in Vernon, he declares with an air of authority that painting is a very inferior art.

THE CONSERVATORY

M and Mme Lercloux were about the same age. But Monsieur looked younger, although he was the weaker of the two. They lived near Mantes in a pretty estate, which they had bought after having made a fortune by selling printed cottons.

The house was surrounded by a beautiful garden containing a poultry yard, Chinese kiosques, and a little conservatory at the end of the avenue. M. Lercloux was short, round, and jovial, with the joviality of a shopkeeper of epicurean tastes. His wife Jean, self-willed, and always discontented, had not succeeded in overcoming her husband's good-humour. She dyed her hair, and sometimes read novels, which made dreams pass through her soul, although she affected to despise writings of this kind. People said she was a woman of strong passions without her having ever done anything to sustain that opinion. But her husband sometimes said:—"My wife is a gay woman," with a certain knowing air which awakened suppositions.

For some years past, however, she had shown herself aggressive towards M. Lerebour, always irritated and hard, as if a secret and unavowable grief tormented her. A sort of misunderstanding was the result. They scarcely spoke to each other, and Madame, whose name was Palmyre, was incessantly heaping unkind compliments, wounding allusions, bitter words, without any apparent reason, on Monsieur, whose name was Gustave.

He bent his back, bored, though gay all the same, endowed with such a fund of contentment that he took his share of those domestic bickerings. He asked himself, nevertheless, what unknown cause could have thus embittered his spouse, for he had a strong feeling that her irritation had a hidden reason, but so difficult to penetrate that his efforts to do so were in vain.

He often said to her :—"Look here, my dear, tell me what you have against me. I feel that you are concealing something."

She invariably replied :—"But there is nothing the matter with me, absolutely nothing. Besides, if I had some cause for discontent, it would be for you to guess at it. I don't like men who understand nothing, who are so soft and incapable that one must come to their assistance to make them grasp the slightest thing."

He murmured dejectedly, "I see clearly that you don't want to say anything."

And he went away still striving to unravel the mystery.

The nights especially became very painful to him, for they always shared the same bed, as one does in good and simple households. It was not, therefore, mere ordinary ill-temper that she displayed towards him. She chose the moment when they were lying side by side to load him with the liveliest raillery. She reproached him principally with growing fat, "You take up all the room, you

are becoming so fat. And you make my back sweat like melted lard, as if you thought it was agreeable to me!"

And she forced him to get up on the slightest pretext, sending him downstairs to look for a newspaper she had forgotten, or a bottle of orange water, which he failed to find. She had herself hidden it away. And she exclaimed in a furious and sarcastic tone, "You might, however, know where to find it, you big booby!" When he had been wandering about the sleeping house for a whole hour, and returned to the room empty-handed, the only thanks she gave him was to say, "Come, get back to bed, it will make you thin to take a little walking; you are becoming as flabby as a sponge."

She kept waking him every moment by declaring that she was suffering from cramps in her stomach, and insisted on his rubbing her stomach with flannel soaked in eau de Cologne. He made efforts to cure her, grieved at seeing her ill; and he proposed to go and rouse up Celeste, then maid. Then, she at once grew angry, crying, "This fellow must be a fool. Well! it is over. I am better now, so go back to bed, you big lout."

He asked, "Are you quite sure you have got better?"

She flung this harsh answer in his face:—

"Yes, hold your tongue! let me sleep! Don't worry me any more about it! You are incapable of doing anything, even of rubbing a woman."

He got into a state of deep dejection, "but, my darling,"

She became exasperated, "I want no 'but's.' Enough, isn't it? Give me some rest now."

And she turned her face to the wall.

Now, one night, she shook him so abruptly that he started up in terror, and found himself in a

sitting posture with rapidity which was not habitual to him.

He stammered, "What? What's the matter?"

She caught him by the arm and pinched him till he cried out. She gave him a box in the ear :—
"I heard some noise in the house."

Accustomed to the frequent alarms of *Mine Lerebour*, he did not disturb himself very much, and quietly asked :—

"What sort of noise, my darling?"

She trembled, as if she were in a state of terror, and replied :— "Noise—why noise—the noise of footsteps. There is someone."

He remained incredulous :— "Someone? You think so? But no; you must be mistaken. Besides, whom do you think it can be?"

She shuddered :—

"Who? Who? Why, thieves, of course, you imbecile!"

He plunged softly under the sheets :—

"Ah! no, my darling! There is nobody. I dare say you only dreamed it."

Then she flung off the coverlet, and, jumping out of bed in a rage :—

"Why, then, you are just as cowardly as you are incapable! In any case, I shall not let myself be massacred owing to your pusillanimity."

And snatching up the tongs from the fireplace, she placed herself in a fighting attitude in front of the bolted door.

Moved by his wife's display of valour, perhaps ashamed, he rose up in his turn sulkily, and without taking off his nightcap he seized the shovel, and placed himself face to face with his better half.

They waited for twenty minutes in the deepest silence. No fresh noise disturbed the repose of the house. Then, Madame, becoming furious, got back

into bed, saying, "Nevertheless, I'm sure there is someone."

In order to avoid anything like a quarrel he did not make any allusion during the day to this panic.

But, next night, Mme. Lerebour woke up her husband with more violence still than the night before, and panting, she stammered, "Gustave, Gustave, somebody has just opened the garden-gate!"

Astonished at this persistence, he fancied that his wife must have had an attack of somnambulism, and was about to shake off this dangerous sleep when he thought he heard, in fact, a slight sound under the walls of the house.

He rose up, rushed to the window, and he saw—yes, he saw—a white figure passing quickly along one of the garden walks.

He murmured, as if he was on the point of fainting, "There is someone." Then he recovered his self-possession, felt more resolute, and suddenly carried away by the formidable anger of a proprietor whose territory has been encroached upon, he said, "Wait! wait! and you shall see!"

He rushed towards the writing-desk, opened it, took out the revolver, and dashed out on to the stairs.

His wife, filled with consternation, followed him, exclaiming, "Gustave, Gustave, don't abandon me, don't leave me alone! Gustave! Gustave!"

But he scarcely heard her; he had by this time laid his hand on the garden-gate.

Then she went back rapidly and barricaded herself in the conjugal chamber.

She waited five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour. Wild terror took possession of her.

Without doubt they had killed him; they had seized, garroted, strangled him. She would have preferred to hear the report of the six barrels of the revolver, to know that he was fighting, that he was defending himself. But this great silence, this terrifying silence of the country overwhelmed her.

She rang for Celeste. Celeste did not come in answer to the bell. She rang again, on the point of swooning, of sinking into unconsciousness. The entire house remained without a sound.

She patted her burning forehead to the window, seeking to peer through the darkness without. She distinguished nothing but the blacker shadows of a row of trees beside the grey footprints of the roads.

It struck half-past twelve. Her husband was absent for the last forty-five minutes. She would never see him again. No! she would never see him again. And she fell on her knees sobbing.

Two light knocks at the door of the apartment made her spring up with a bound. M. Lerebourn called out to her, "Open, pray, Palmyre, 'tis I." She rushed forward, opened the door, and standing in front of him, with her arms akimbo, and her eyes full of tears, exclaimed, "Where have you been, you dirty brute? Ah! you left me here by myself nearly dead of fright. Ah! you care no more about me than if I never existed."

He closed the bedroom-door; and he laughed and laughed like a madman, grinning from ear to ear, with his hands on his stomach, till the tears came into his eyes.

Mme. Lerebourn, stupified, remained silent.

He stammered, "It was—it was Celeste, who had an appointment in the conservatory. If you knew what—what I have seen"

She had turned pale, choking with indignation.

"Eh? Do you tell me so? Celeste? In my

house? in—my—house? . . . in my—my—in my conservatory? And you have not killed the man who was her accomplice! You had a revolver and did not kill him! . . . in my house . . . in my house."

She sat down, not feeling able to do anything.

He danced a caper, snapped his fingers, smacked his tongue, and, still laughing, "If you knew, it you knew."

He suddenly gave her kiss

She tore herself away from him. And in a voice broken with rage, she said, "I will not let this girl remain one day longer in my house, do you hear? Not one day, not one hour. When she returns to the house we will throw her out."

M. Lereboul had seized his wife by the waist, and he planted rows of kisses in her neck, loud kisses, as in bygone days. She became silent once more, petrified with astonishment. But he holding her clasped in his arms, drew her softly towards the bed.

Towards half-past nine in the morning, Celeste astonished at not yet having seen her master and mistress, who always rose early, came and knocked softly at their door.

They were in bed, and they were gaily chatting side by side. She stood there astonished, and said, "Madame, it is the coffee."

Mme. Lereboul said in a very soft voice, "Bring it here to me, my girl. We are a little tired—we have slept very badly."

Scarcely had the servant-maid gone than M. Lereboul began to laugh again, tickling his wife under the chin, and repeating, "If you knew. Oh! if you knew."

But she caught his hands, "Look here! keep

quiet, my darling, if you laugh like this you will make yourself ill."

And she kissed him softly on the eyes

* * *

Mme Lereboud has no more fits of sourness. Sometimes on bright nights the husband and wife came, with furtive steps, along by the clumps of trees and flower-beds as far as the little conservatory at the end of the garden. And they remained there planted side by side with their faces pasted against the glass as if they were looking at something strange and full of interest going on within.

They have increased Celeste's wages.

M Lereboud has got thin.



MY TWENTY-FIVE DAYS.



I HAD just taken possession of my room in the hotel, a narrow apartment between two papered partitions, so that, then, I could hear all the sounds made by my neighbours; and I was beginning to arrange in the glass cupboard my clothes and my linen when I opened the drawer which is in the middle of this piece of furniture, I immediately noticed a manuscript of rolled paper. Having rolled it out, I spread it open before me, and read this title:—

"My Twenty-five Days."

It was the diary of a bather, of the last occupant

of my room, and had been left behind there through forgetfulness at the hour of departure.

These notes may be of some interest to sensible and healthy persons who never leave their homes. It is for their benefit that I transcribe them without altering a letter.

“Chatel-Guyon, July 15th.

“At the first glance, it is not gay, this country. So I am going to spend twenty-five days there to have my liver and my stomach treated, and to get a little thin. The twenty-five days of a bather are very like the twenty-eight days of a reservist; they are all devoted to fatigue duty, severe fatigue duty. To-day, nothing as yet; I am installed; I have made the acquaintance of locality and the doctors. Chatel-Guyon is composed of a stream in which flows yellow water, in the midst of several mountain peaks, where are erected a casino, houses, and stone crosses. At the side of the stream, in the depths of the valley, may be seen a square building surrounded by a little garden; this is the establishment of the baths. Sad people wander around this building—the invalids. A great silence reigns in the walks, shaded by trees, for this is not a pleasure-station, but a true health-station; one takes care of his health there through convalescence, and one cannot get cured there, it seems.

“Competent people declare even that the mineral springs perform true miracles there. However, no votive offering is hung around the cashier's office.

“From time to time a gentleman or a lady comes over to a kiosk with a slate roof, which shelters a woman of smiling and gentle aspect, and a spring boiling in a basin of cement. Not a word is exchanged between the invalid and the female custodian of the healing water. She hands to the new-comer a little glass in which air-bubbles quiver

in the transparent liquid. The other drops and goes off with a grave step in order to resume his interrupted walk under the trees.

"No noise in the little park, no breath of air in the leaves; no voice passes through the silence. One ought to write at the entrance to this district:—"Here you no longer laugh; you nurse yourself."

"The people who chat resemble mutes who should open their mouths in order to simulate sounds, so much are they afraid of letting their voices escape.

"In the hotel, the same silence. It is a big hotel, where you dine solemnly with people of good position, who have nothing to say to each other. Their manners bespeak good-breeding, and their faces reflect the conviction of a superiority of which it would be difficult to give actual proof;

"At two o'clock I made my way to the casino, a little wooden hut perched on a hillock where one climbs through paths frequented by goats. But the view from that height is admirable. Châtel-Guyon is situated in a very narrow valley, exactly between the plain and the mountain. I behold, then, at the left the first great waves of the mountains of Auvergne covered with woods, and exhibiting here and there big grey spots, their hard lava-bones, for we are at the foot of the extinct volcanoes. At the right, through the narrow slope of the valley, I discover a plain infinite as the sea, steeped in a bluish fog, which lets one only dimly discern the villages, the towns, the yellow fields of ripe corn, and the green squares of meadow-land, shaded with apple-trees. It is the Limagne, immense and flat, always enveloped in a light veil of vapours.

"The night has come. And now, after having dined alone, I write these lines beside my open

window. I hear, over there, in front of me, the little orchestra of the casino, which plays air just as a wild bird sings all alone in the desert.

"A dog from time to time breaks out into a bark. This great calm does good. Good night

"July 16th.—Nothing: I have taken a bath, of rather a douche. I have swallowed three glasses of water, and I have walked in the pathways of the park, for a quarter of an hour between each glass, then half an hour after the last. I have begun my twenty five days."

"July 17th.—Remarked two mysterious pretty women, who are taking their baths and their meals after everyone else.

"July 18th.—Nothing

"July 18th.—Saw the two pretty women again. They have style and a little indescribable air which I like very much."

"July 20th.—Long walk in a charming wooded valley, as far as the Hermitage of Stns-Souci. This country is delightful, although sad, but so calm, so sweet, so green. One meets along the mountain roads the long waggons loaded with hay drawn by two cows at a slow pace, or held back by them going down the slopes with a great effort of their heads, which are tied together. A man with a big black hat on his head is driving them with a slight switch, tipping them on the side of the forehead; and after with a simple gesture, a gesture energetic and grave, he suddenly draws them up when the excessive load precipitates their journey down the too rugged descents.

"The air is good to inhale in these valleys. And if it is very warm, the dust bears with it a faint colour of Vanilla and of the stable, for so many cows pass over these routes that they leave there a little of them everywhere. And this odour is a

possible when it would be a stretch if it came from other animals.

"July 21st.—Excursion to the valley of the Buval. It is a narrow gorge, enclosed by superb rocks at the very foot of the mountain. A stream flows through the space between the heaped-up boulders.

"As I reached the bottom of this ravine I heard women's voices, and I soon perceived the two mysterious ladies of my hotel, who were chatting, seated on a stone."

"The occasion appeared to me a good one, and without hesitation I presented myself. My overtures were received without embarrassment. We walked back together to the hotel and we talked about Paris. They knew, it seemed, many people whom I knew too. Who can they be?

"I shall see them to-morrow. There is nothing more amusing than such meetings as this."

"July 22nd.—Day almost entirely passed with the two unknown ladies. They were very pretty, by Jove, one a brunette, and the other a blonde. They say they are widows. Hum? . . .

"I offered to accompany them in a visit to Royat to-morrow, and they accepted my offer."

"Chatel-Guyon is less sad than I thought on my arrival."

"July 23rd.—Day spent at Royat. Royat is a little party of hotels at the bottom of a valley, at the gate of Clermont-Ferrand. A great deal of society there. A great park full of movement. Suberb view of the Puy-de-Dome, seen at the end of a perspective of vales.

"I am greatly occupied with my fair companions, which is flattering to myself. The man who escorts

a pretty woman always believes himself crowned with an aureole—with much more reason, the man who goes along with one on each side of him. Nothing is so pleasant as to dine in a restaurant, well frequented, with a female companion at whom everybody stares, and there is nothing besides better calculated to set a man up in the estimation of his neighbours.

"To go to the Bois, in a trap drawn by a sorry nag, or to go out into the boulevard escorted by a plain woman, are the two most humiliating accidents which could strike a delicate heart preoccupied with the opinions of others. Of all luxuries woman is the rarest and the most distinguished: she is the one that costs most, and which we desire most; she is, therefore, the one that we ought best to exhibit under the jealous eye of the public.

"To exhibit to the world a pretty woman leaning on your arm is to excite, all at once, every kind of jealousy, it is as much as to say, 'Look here! I am rich, since I possess this rare and costly object; I have taste, since I have known how to discover this pearl; perhaps even I am loved, unless I am deceived by her, which would still prove that others, too, consider her charming.

"But what a disgraceful thing it is to bring an ugly woman with you through the city!

"And how many humiliating things this gives people to understand!

"In the first place they assume she must be your wife, for how could it be supposed that you would have an unattractive mistress? A real wife might be ungraceful; but then her ugliness suggests a thousand things disagreeable to you. One supposes you must be a notary or a magistrate, as these two professions have a monopoly of grotesque and well-dowered spouses. Now, is this

not painful for a man? And then it seems to proclaim to the public that you have the odious courage and are even under a legal obligation to caress that ridiculous face and that ill-shaped body, and that you will, without doubt, be shameless enough to make a mother of this by no means desirable being: which is the very height of ridicule.

"July 24th.—I never leave the side of the two unknown widows whom I am beginning to know well. This country is delightful, and our hotel is excellent. Good season. The treatment has done me an immense amount of good.

"July 25th.—Drive in a landau to the lake of Tazenat. An exquisite and unexpected party, decided on at lunch. Abrupt departure after getting up from the table. After a long journey through the mountains, we suddenly perceived an admirable little lake, quite round, quite blue, clear as glass, and situated at the bottom of a dead crater. One edge of this immense basin is barren, the other is wooded. In the midst of the trees a small house, where sleeps a good-natured, intellectual man, a sage, who passes his days in this Virgilian region. He opens his dwelling for us. An idea comes into my head. I exclaim:—'Suppose we bathe?'

'Yes,' they said, 'but costumes.'

"'Bah! we are in the desert.'

"'And we did batho!

"If I were a poet, how I would describe this unforgettable vision of bodies young and naked in the transparency of the water! The sloping high sides shut in the lake, motionless, glittering, and round, like a piece of silver; the sun pours into it its warm light in a flood; and along the rocks the fair flesh slips into the almost invisible wave in which the swimmers seemed suspended. • On the sand bottom of the lake we saw the shadows of the light movements passing and repassing.

"July 26th.—Some persons seemed to look with shocked and disapproving eyes at my rapid intimacy with the two fair widows! Persons so constituted imagine that life is made for worrying one's self. Everything that appears to be amusing becomes immediately a breach of good-breeding or morality. For them duty has inflexible and mortally sad rules.

"I would draw their attention with all respect to the fact that duty is not the same for Mormons, Arabs, Zulus, Turks, Englishmen and Frenchmen, and that he will find very virtuous people amongst all these nations.

"I will cite a single example. From the point of view of woman, English duty is fixed at nine years, while English duty does not commence till twelve. As for me, I take a little of each people's notion of duty, and of the whole I make a result comparable to the morality of holy King Solomon.

"July 27th Good news. I have grown 620 grams thinner. Excellent, this water of Chatel-Guyon! I am bringing the widows to dine at Riom. Sad town whose anagram constitutes an offensive vicinity for healing springs; Riom, Mori.

"July 28th.—Hoity Toity! My two widows have been visited by two gentlemen who came to look for them. Two widows, without doubt. They are leaving this evening. They have written to me on fancy notepaper.

"July 29th.—Alone! Long excursion on foot to the extinct crater of Nœkere. Splendid view.

"July 30th.—Nothing. I am taking the treatment.

"July 31st.—Ditto. Ditto. This pretty country is full of polluted streams. I am drawing the notice of the municipality to the abominable sink which poisons the road in front of the hotel. All

the remains of the kitchen of the establishment are thrown into it. This is a good way to breed cholera.

"August 1st. — Nothing. The treatment."

"August 2nd. — Admirable walk to Châteaumeillant, a station for rheumatic patients, where everybody is lame. Nothing can be quicker than this population of cripples."

"August 3rd. — Nothing. The treatment."

"August 4th. — Ditto. Ditto."

"August 5th. — Ditto. Ditto."

"August 6th. — Despair! . . . I have just weighed myself. I have got fatter by 310 grams. Put what then?"

"August 7th. — 6 kilometres in a carriage in the mountain. I will not mention the name of the country through respect for its women."

"This excursion has been pointed out to me as a beautiful one, and one that was rarely made. After four hours on the road I arrived at a rather pretty village, on the border of a river in the midst of an admirable wood of walnut trees. I had not yet seen a forest of walnut-trees of such dimensions in Auvergne. It constitutes, moreover, all the wealth of the district, for it is planted on a common. This common was formerly only a hillside covered with brushwood. The authorities had tried in vain to get it cultivated. It was scarcely enough to feed a few sheep."

"To-day it is a superb wood, thanks to the women, and it has a curious name; it is called 'the Sins of the Cure'."

"Now it is right to say that the women of the mountain district have the reputation of being light, lighter than in the plain. A bachelor who meets them owes them at least a kiss; and if he does not take more he is only a blockhead. If we think rightly on it, the way of looking at the

matter is the only one that is logical and reasonable. As woman, whether she be of the town or the country, has for her natural mission to please man, man should always prove that she pleases him. If he abstains from every sort of demonstration, this means that he has found her ugly; it is almost an insult to her. If I were a woman, I would not receive a second time a man who failed to show me respect at our first meeting, for I would consider that he failed in appreciation of my beauty, my charm, and my feminine qualities.

"So the bachelors of the village X --- often proved to the women of the district that they found them to their taste, and, as the curé was unable to prevent these demonstrations, as gallant as they were natural, he resolved to utilise them for the profit of the natural prosperity. So he imposed as a penance on every woman who had gone wrong, a walnut to be planted on the common. And every night lanterns were seen moving about like will o' the wisp on the hillock, for the erring ones scarcely like to perform their penances in broad daylight.

"In two years there was no room any longer on the lands belonging to the village; and to day they calculate that there are more than three thousand trees around the belfry which rings for the offices through their foliage. These are 'the Sins of the Curé.'

"Since we have been seeking for so many plans for rewooding in France, the Administration of Forests might surely enter into some arrangement with the clergy to employ a method so simple as that employed by this Jumble curé.

"August 7th. -- Treatment.

"August 8th. -- I am packing up my trunks, and saying good-bye to the charming little district so calm and silent, to the green mountain, to the

quiet valleys, to the deserted* casino, from which you can see, almost veiled by its ligght bluish mist, the immense plain of the Limagne

"I shall leave to-morrow."

Here the manuscript stopped. I wish to add nothing to it, my impressions of the country not having been exactly the same as those of my predecessor. For I did not find the two widows!

THE QUESTION OF LATIN

THIS question of Latin, with which we were so much stupefied sometime since, recalls to my mind a story--a story of my youth.

I was finishing my studies with a teacher, in a big central town, at the Institution Robineau, celebrated through the entire province owing to the special attention paid there to Latin studies.

For the past ten years, the Institution Robineau beat at every competitive examination, the Imperial "lycee" of the town, and all the colleges of the Subprefecture! and his constant successes were due, they said, to an usher, a simple usher, M. Piquedent, or rather Pere Piquedent.

He was one of those middle-aged men quite grey, whose real age it is impossible to know, and whose history we can guess at a first glance. Having entered as an usher at twenty into the first institution that presented itself, so that he could proceed to take out his degree of Master of Arts first, and afterwards the degree of Doctor of Laws, he found himself so much enmeshed in this sinister life that he remained an usher all his life. But his love for Latin did not leave him but harassed

him like an unhealthy passion. He continued to read the poets, the prose writers, the historians, to interpret them and penetrate their meaning, to comment on them with a perseverance bordering on madness.

One day, the idea came into his head to force all the students of his class to answer him in Latin only; and he persisted in this resolution until at last they were capable of sustaining an entire conversation with him, just as they would in their mother-tongue. He listened to them, as a leader of an orchestra listens to his musicians rehearsing, and striking his desk every moment with his ruler, he exclaimed -

"Monsieur Lefrere, Monsieur Lefrere, you are committing a solecism! You are not recalling the rule to mind."

"Monsieur Plantel, your turn of phrase is altogether French and in no way Latin. You must understand the genius of a language. Look here, listen to me."

Now it came to pass that the pupils of the Institution Robineau carried off, at the end of the year, all the prizes for composition, translation, and Latin conversation.

Next year, the principal, a little man, as cunning as an ape, of whom he had, besides, the grinning and grotesque physique, got printed on his programmes, on his advertisements, and painted on the door of his institution:--

"Latin Studies a Speciality. Five first prizes carried off in the five classes of the Lycees."

"Two prizes of honour at the general Competitive Examinations with all the lycees and colleges of France."

For ten years the Institution Robineau triumphed in the same fashion. Now, my father, allured by these successes, sent me as a day-pupil to Robi-

neau's—or, as we called it, Robinetto or Robinet—two—and made me take special private lessons from Pere Piquedent at the rate of five francs per hour, out of which the usher got two francs and the principal three francs. I was at the time in my eighteenth year, and was in the Philosophy class.

These private lessons were given in a little room looking out on the street. It so happened that Pere Piquedent, instead of talking Latin to me, as he did when teaching publicly in the Institution, kept telling about his troubles in French. Without relations, without friends, the poor man conceived an attachment to me, and poured out into my heart his own misery.

He had never for the last ten or fifteen years chatted confidently with anyone.

"I am like an oak in a desert," he said—"*sicut ocerus in solitudine*."

The other ushers disgusted him. He knew nobody in the town since he had no liberty for the purpose of making acquaintances.

"Not even at nights, my friend, and that is the hardest thing on me. The dream of my life is to have a room of my own, with furniture, my own books, little things that belonged to myself and which others could not touch. And I have nothing of my own, nothing except my shirt and my frock-coat, nothing, not even my mattress and my pillow! I have not four walls to shut myself up in, except when I come to give a lesson in this room. Do you see what this means—a man forced to spend his life without ever having the right, without ever finding the time to shut himself up all alone, no matter where, to think, to reflect, to work, to dream? Ah! my dear boy, a key, the key of a door which one can open—this is happiness, mark you, the only happiness!

"Here, all day long, the study with all these dirty brats pumping about in it, and during the night the dormitory with the same dirty brats snoring. And I have to sleep in the public bed at the end of two rows of beds occupied by these blackguards whom I must look after. I can never be alone, never! If I go out I find the streets full of people, and, when I am tired of walking, I go into some cafe crowded with smokers and billiard players. I tell you what, it is a regular prison."

I asked him :-

"Why did you not take up some other line, Monsieur Piquedent?"

He exclaimed :-

"What, my little friend? I am not a bootmaker or a joiner or a hatter or a baker or a hairdresser. I only know Latin, and I have not the diploma which would enable me to sell my knowledge at a high price. If I were a doctor I would sell for a hundred francs what I now sell for a hundred sous, and I would supply it probably of an inferior quality, for my academic rank would be enough to sustain my reputation."

Sometimes he would say to me :-

"I have no rest in life except in the hours spent with you. Don't be afraid! you'll lose nothing by that. I'll make it up to you in the study by teaching you to speak twice as much Latin as the others."

One day I grew bolder, and offered him a cigarette. He stared at me with astonishment at first, then he gave a glance towards the door :-

"If anyone were to come in, my dear boy . . . ?"

"Well, let us smoke at the window," said I.

And we went and leaned with our elbows on the window-sill facing the street, keeping our hands over the little rolls of tobacco wrapped up in tissue-paper so that they concealed them from view like

a shell. Just opposite to us was a laundry. Four women in white bodices were passing over the linen spread out before them, the heavy and hot irons letting a damp fume escape from them.

Suddenly, another, a fifth carrying on her arm a large basket, which made her back stoop, came out to bring the customers their shirts and chemises, their handkerchiefs and their sheets. She stopped on the threshold as if she were already fatigued; then, she raised her eyes, smiled when she saw us smoking, flung at us, with her left hand, which was free, the sly kiss characteristic of a free-and-easy working-woman; and she went away at a slow pace, dragging her shoes after her.

She was a damsel of about twenty, small, rather thin, pale, rather pretty, with the manners of a street-wench, and eyes laughing under her ill-combed fair hair.

Père Piquedent, affected, began murmuring:—

"What an occupation for a woman! Really a trade only fit for a horse."

And he spoke with emotion about the misery of the people. He had a heart which swelled with lofty democratic sentiment, and he referred to the fatiguing pursuits of the working class with phrases borrowed from Jean-Jacques Rosseau, and with sobs in his throat.

Next day, as we were resting our elbows at the same window, the same workwomen perceived us, and cried out to us:—

"Good-day, my scholars!" in a comical sort of tone, while she made a contemptuous gesture with her hands.

I flung her a cigarette; which she immediately began to smoke. And the four other jokers rushed out to the door with outstretched hands to get cigarettes also.

And, each day, a friendly relationship was taking

place between the working-women of the pavement and the idlers of the boarding-school.

Pere Piquedent was really a comic sight to look at. He trembled at being noticed, for he might lose his place; and he made timid and ridiculous gestures, quite a theatrical display of amorousness, to which the women responded with a regular fusillade of kisses.

A perfidious idea sprang up in my head. One day, on entering into our room, I said to the old usher in a low tone:—

"You would not believe it, Monsieur Piquedent, I met the little washerwoman! You know the one, the woman who had the basket, and I spoke to her!"

He asked, rather excited by the tone I had taken:—

What did she say to you?"

"She said to me, goodness gracious! she said she thought you were very nice. The fact of the matter is, I believe, I believe, that she is a little in love with you." . . . I saw he was growing pale, he went on:—

"She is laughing at me, of course. These things don't happen at my age."

I said gravely:—

"How is that? You are very nice."

As I felt that my trick had produced its effect on him, I did not press the matter.

But every day I pretended that I had met the little laundress and that I had spoken to her about him, so that in the end he believed me, and sent her ardent and earnest kisses.

"Now, it happened that one morning, on my way to the boarding-school, I really came across her. I accosted her without hesitation, as if I had known her for the last ten years.

"Good-day, mademoiselle. Are you quite well?"

"Very well, monsieur, thank you."

"Will you have a cigarette?"

"Oh! not in the street."

"You can smoke it at home."

"In that case, I will."

"Let me tell you, mademoiselle, there is something you don't know."

"What is that, monsieur?"

"The old gentleman - my old professor, I mean-- ---"

"Pere Piquedent."

"Yes, Pere Piquedent. So you know his name?"

"Faith, I do! What of that?"

"Well, he is in love with you!"

She burst out laughing, like a madwoman, and exclaimed :—

"This is only humbug!"

"Oh! no, 'tis no humbug! He keeps talking of you all the time he is giving lessons. I bet that he'll marry you!"

She ceased laughing. The idea of marriage makes every girl serious. Then she repeated, with an incredulous air :—

"This is humbug."

"I swear to you 'tis true."

She picked up her basket, which she had laid down at her feet.

"Well, we'll see," she said. And she went away.

Presently, when I had reached the boarding-school, I took Pere Piquedent aside, and said :—

"You must write to her; she is mad about you."

And he wrote a long letter of a soft and affectionate character, full of phrases and circumlocutions, metaphors and smiles, philosophy and academic gallantry, and I took on myself the responsibility of delivering it to the young woman.

She read it with gravity, with emotion; then she murmured :--

"How well he writes; it is easy to see he has got education! Does he really mean to marry me?"

I replied intrepidly :-- "Faith, he has lost his head about you."

"Then he must invite me to dinner on Sunday at the Ile des Fleurs."

I promised that she should be invited.

Pere Piquedent was much touched by everything I told him about her.

I added :--

"She loves you, Monsieur Piquedent, and I believe her to be a decent girl. It is not right to seduce her and then abandon her."

He replied in a firm tone --

"I hope I, too, am a decent man, my friend."

I confess I had at the time no plan. I was playing a practical joke, a schoolboy's joke, nothing more. I had been aware of the simplicity of the old usher, his innocence and his weakness. I amused myself without asking myself how it would turn out. I was eighteen, and I had been for a long time looked upon at the lycee as a knowing practical joker.

So, it was agreed that Pere Piquedent and I should set out in a hackney-coach for the ferry of Queue de Vache, that we should there pick up Angeles and that I should get them to come into my boat, for at this time I was fond of boating. I would then bring them to the Ile de Fleurs, where the three of us would dine. I had made

it my business to be present, in order better to enjoy my triumph, and the usher, consenting to my arrangement, and proved clearly, in fact, that he had lost his head by thus risking his post.

When we arrived at the ferry, where my boat had been moored since the morning, I saw in the grass, or rather above the tall weeds of the bank, an enormous red parasol, resembling a monstrous wild poppy. Under the parasol we waited for the little laundress in her Sunday clothes. I was surprised. She was really nice looking, though pale, and graceful, though with a suburban gracefulness.

Père Piquedent raised his hat and bowed. She put out her hand towards him, and they stared at one another without uttering a word. Then they stepped into my boat, and I took the oars. They were seated side by side near the stern.

The usher was the first to speak.

"This is nice weather for a row in a boat."

She murmured --

"Oh! yes."

She drew her hand through the current, skimming the water with her fingers, which raised up a thin transparent little stream, like a sheet of glass. It made a slight sound, a gentle ripple, as the boat moved along.

When they were in the restaurant, she took it on herself to speak, and ordered dinner, fried fish, a chicken and salad; then she led us on toward the isle, which she knew perfectly.

After this, she was gay, romping, and even rather mocking.

Up to the dessert, no question of love arose. I had treated them to champagne, and Père Piquedent was tipsy. Herself slightly elevated, she called out to him:—

"Monsieur Piquenez."

He said, all of a sudden :—

"Mademoiselle, Monsieur Kaoul has communicated my sentiments to you."

She became as serious as a judge,

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Are you going to give any answer?"

"We never reply to these questions!"

He panted with emotion, and went on :—

"After all, a day will come when I may make you like me."

She smiled,

"You big fool! You are very nice."

"In short, mademoiselle, do you think that, later on, we might ———"

She hesitated a second; then in a trembling voice she said :—

"Is it in order to marry me you say that! For never otherwise, you know."

"Yes, mademoiselle!"

"Well, that's all right, Monsieur Piquedent :"

It is thus that these two silly creatures promised marriage through the wiles of a reckless school-boy. But I did not believe that it was serious, nor indeed did they themselves perhaps.

On her part there was a certain feeling of hesitation.

"You know, I have nothing, not four sous."

He stammered, for he was as drunk as Silenus.

"I have saved five thousand francs."

She exclaimed triumphantly :—

"Then we can set up in business?"

He became restless.

"In what business?" •

"What do I know about that? We shall see. With five thousand francs we could do many things. You don't want me to go and live in your boarding-school, do you?"

He had not looked forward so far as this, and he stammered in great perplexity:—

"What business could we set up in? It is not convenient, for all I know is Latin!"

She reflected in her turn, passing in review all the professions she had longed for.

"You could not be a doctor?"

"No, I have not the diploma."

"Or a chemist?"

"No more than the other."

She uttered a cry, a cry of joy. She had discovered it.

"Then we'll buy a grocer's shop! Oh! what luck! we'll buy a grocer's shop. Not on a big scale, all the same; with five thousand francs one does not go far." ❀

He was shocked at the suggestion.

"No, I can't be a grocer. I am—I am—too well known. I only know Latin, that is all I know."

But she poured a glass of champagne down his throat. He drank it and was silent.

We got back into the boat. The night was dark, very dark. I saw clearly, however, that he had caught her by the waist, and that they were hugging each other again and again.

It was a frightful catastrophe. Our escapade was discovered, with the result that Pere Piquedent was dismissed. And my father, in a fit of anger, sent

me to finish my course of philosophy at Ribaudet's School.

Six months later I passed for my degree of Bachelor of Arts. Then I went to study law in Paris, and I did not return to my native town till ten years after.

At the corner of the Rue de Serpent a shop caught my eye. Over the door were the words "Colonial products - Piquident." Then underneath so as to enlighten the most ignorant, "Grocery."

I exclaimed

"*Quantum mutata ab illo!*"

He raised his head, left his female customer, and rushed towards me with outstretched hands.

"Ah! my young friend, my young friend, here you are! What luck! what luck!"

A beautiful woman, very plump, abruptly left the counter, and flung herself on my breast. I had some difficulty in recognising her, so fat had she grown.

I asked

"So then you're going on well?"

Piquident had gone back to weigh the groceries.

"Oh! very well, very well, very well. I have made three thousand francs clear this year!"

"And what about the Latin, Monsieur Piquident?"

"Oh! goodness gracious! the Latin, the Latin, the Latin. Well, you see, it does not keep the pot boiling!"

III THE FIRST SNOWFALL

THE long promenade of La Croisette runs in a curve up to the edge of the blue water. Over there, at the right, the Hotel advances far into the sea. It obstructs the view, shutting in the horizon with the pretty Southern aspect of its peaked, numerous, and fantastic summits.

At the left, the isles of Sainte Marguerite and Saint Honorat, lying in the water, display their backs, covered with fir trees.

And all along the great gulf, all along the tall mountains, that encircle Cannes, the white villa residences seem to be sleeping in the sunlight. You can see them from a distance, the bright houses, scattered from the top to the bottom of the mountains, dotting the dark greenery with specks of snow.

Those near the water open their gates on the vast promenade which is lashed by the quiet waves. The air is soft and balmy. It is one of those days when in this Southern climate the chill of winter is not felt. Above the walls of the gardens may be seen orange trees and citron trees full of golden fruit. Ladies advance with slow steps over the sand of the avenue, followed by children rolling hoops or chatting with gentlemen.

A young lady has just peeped out through the door of her coquettish little house facing La Croisette. She stops for a moment to gaze at the promenaders, strollers, and with the gut of one utterly enfeebled, makes her way towards an empty bench right in front of the sea. Fatigued after having gone twenty paces, she sat down out

of breath. Her pale face seems that of a dead woman. She coughs, and raises to her lips her transparent fingers, as if to stop those shakings that exhaust her.

She gazes at the sky full of sunshine, and at the swallows, at the zigzag summits of the Eistrel over there, and at the sea, quite close to her, so blue, so calm, so beautiful.

She smiles still, and murmurs :—

"Oh! how happy I am!"

She knows however, that she is going to die, that she will never see the springtime, that in a year, along the same promenade, these same people who pass before her now will come again to breathe the warm air of this charming spot, with their children a little bigger, with their hearts all filled with hopes, with tenderness, with happiness, whilst at the bottom of an oak coffin, the poor flesh which is left to her still to-day will have fallen into a condition of rottenness, leaving only her bones lying in the silk robe which she has selected for a winding-sheet.

She will be no more. Everything in life will go on as before for others. For her life will be over, over for ever. She will be no more. She smiles, and inhales as well as she can, with her diseased lungs, the perfumed air of the gardens.

And she sinks into a reverie

* * *

She recalls the past. She has been married, four years ago, to a Norman gentleman. He was a strong young man, bearded, healthy-looking, with wide shoulders, narrow mind, and joyous disposition.

They had been united through worldly motives, which she did not quite understand. She would willingly have said "Yes." She did say "Yes,"

with a movement of the head in order not to thwart her father and mother. She was a Parisian, gay, and full of the joy of living.

Her husband brought her home to his Norman chateau. It was a huge stone building, surrounded by tall trees of great age. A high clump of fir-trees shut out the view in front. On the right an opening in the trees presented a view of the plain which stretched out, quite flat, up to the distant farmsteads. A cross-road passed before the boundary-line, leading to the high road three kilometres away.

Oh! she can remember everything, her arrival, her first day in her new abode, and her isolated fate afterwards.

When she stepped out of the carriage, she glanced at the old building, and laughingly exclaimed:--

"It does not look gay!"

Her husband began to laugh in his turn, and replied:--

"Look! we get used to it. You'll see. I never feel bored in it, for my part."

That day, they passed their time in embracing each other, and she did not find it too long. This lasted for the best part of three months. The days passed one after the other in insignificant yet absorbing occupations. She learned the value and the importance of the little things of life. She knew that people can interest themselves in the price of eggs, which costs a few centimes more or less according to the season.

It was summer. She went to the fields to see the harvest cut. The gaiety of the sunshine kept up the gaiety of her heart.

The autumn came. Her husband went hunting. He started in the morning with his two dogs, Madoz and Mirza. Then she remained alone,

without grieving herself, moreover, at Henry's absence. She was, however, very fond of him, but he was not missed by her. When he returned home, her affection was especially absorbed by the dogs. She took care of them every evening with a mother's affection, caressed them incessantly, gave them a thousand charming little names, which she had no idea of applying to her husband.

He invariably told her all about his hunting. He pointed out the places where he found the partridges, expressed his astonishment at not having caught any hares in Joseph Ledentu's clover, or else appeared indignant at the conduct of M. Lechapelier, of Harve, who always followed the border of his estates to shoot game that had been started by him, Henry de Parvill.

She replied, "Yes, indeed! it is not right," thinking of something else all the while.

The winter came, the Norman winter, cold and rainy. The endless rainstorms came down on the slates of the great many-angled roof, rising like a blade towards the sky. The road seemed like streams of mud, the country a plain of mud, and no voice could be heard save the whirling flight of crows rolling themselves out like a cloud alighting on a field, and then hurrying away again.

About four o'clock, the army of dark, flying creatures came and perched in the tall beeches at the left of the chateau, emitting deafening cries. During nearly an hour, they fluttered from tree-top to tree-top, seemed to be fighting, croaked, and made the grey branches move with their black wings. She gazed at them, each evening, with a pressure of the heart so deeply was she penetrated by the lugubrious melancholy of the night falling on the desolate grounds.

Then she rang for the lamp; and she drew near

the fire. She burned heaps of wood without succeeding in warming the spacious apartments invaded by the humidity. She felt cold every day, ever where, in the drawing room, at meals, in her own apartment. It seemed to her she was cold, even to the marrow of her bones. The only time he came in to dinner, he was always hunting, or else occupied with sowing seed, tilling the soil, and all the work of the country.

He used to come back jolly and full of mood, rubbing his hands while he exclaimed:

"What wretched weather!"

Or else —

"It is a good thing to have a fire."

"Well, how are you to-day? Do you feel in good spirits?"

He was happy, in good health, without desires, thinking of nothing else save this simple, sound, and quiet life.

About December, when the snow had come, she suffered so much from the icy cold air of the chateau, which seemed to have acquired a chill with the centuries it had passed through, as human beings do with years, that she asked her husband one evening:

"Look here, Henry! You ought to have a hot air stove put into the house, it would dry the walls. I assure you that I cannot warm myself from morning till night."

At first he was stunned at this extravagant idea of introducing a hot-air stove into his manor house. It would have seemed natural to him to have his dogs fed out of his silver plate. Then he gave a tremendous laugh, which made his chest heave, while he exclaimed:

"A hot air stove here! A hot air stove here! Ha! ha! ha! what a good joke!"

She persisted.

"I assure you, dear, I feel frozen; you don't feel it because you are always moving about, but, all the same, I feel frozen."

He replied, still laughing -

"Pooh! you'll get used to it, and, besides, it is excellent for the health. You will only be all the better for it. We are not Parisians, damn it! to live in hot houses. And, besides, the spring is quite new."

* * *

About the beginning of January, a great misfortune befall her. Her father and mother died of a carriage accident. She came to Paris for the funeral. And her mind was entirely plunged in grief on account of it for about six months.

The softness of fine days at length awakened her, and she lived a sad drifting life of languor until autumn.

When the cold weather came back she was brought face to face, for the first time, with the gloomy future. What was she to do? Nothing. What was going to happen to her henceforth? Nothing. What expectation, what hope, could revive her heart? None. A doctor, who was consulted, declared that she would never have children.

Sharper, more penetrating still than the year before, the cold made her suffer continually.

She stretched out her shivering hands to the big flames. The glaring fire burned her face; but icy puffs seemed to slip down her back and to penetrate between the flesh and her underclothing. And she shook from head to foot. Innumerable currents of air appeared to have taken up their abode in the apartment, living, crafty currents of air as

cruel as enemies. She encountered them every moment; they were incessantly buffeting her, sometimes on the hands, sometimes on the neck, with their treacherous, frozen breath.

Once more she spoke of an hot-water stove; but her husband heard her request as if she were asking for the moon. The introduction of such an apparatus at Parville appeared to him as impossible as the discovery of the Philosopher's Stone.

Having been at Rouen on business one day he brought back to his wife a dainty foot-warmer made of copper, which he laughingly called "a portable hot-water stove;" and he considered that this would prevent her henceforth from ever being cold.

Towards the end of December she understood that she could not live thus always, and she said timidly one evening at dinner:—

"Listen, dear! Are we not going to spend a week or two in Paris before spring?"

He was stupefied.

"In Paris? In Paris? But what are we to do there? Ah! no, by Jove! We are better off here. What odd ideas come into your head sometimes."

She faltered:—

"It might distract us a little."

He did not understand.

"What is it you want to distract you? Theatres, evening parties, dinners in town? You knew, however, well in coming here that you ought not to expect any distractions of this kind."

She saw a reproach in these words and in the tone in which they were uttered. She relapsed into silence. She was timid and gentle, without resisting power and without strength of will.

In January the cold weather returned with violence. Then the snow covered the earth.

One evening, as she watched the great whirling cloud of crows winding round the trees, she began to weep, in spite of herself.

Her husband came in. He asked in great surprise :—

"What is the matter with you?"

He was happy, quite happy, never having dreamed of another life or other pleasures. He had been born and had grown up in this melancholy district. He felt well in his own house, at his ease in body and mind.

He did not realise that we may desire events, have a thirst for changing pleasures; he did not understand that it does not seem natural to certain beings to remain in the same places during the four seasons; he seemed to know that spring, summer, autumn, and winter have, for multitudes of persons, new pleasures in new countries.

She could not say anything in reply, and she quickly dried her eyes. At last she murmured, in a distracted sort of way :—

"I am—I—I am a little sad—I am a little bored."

But she was seized with terror for having even said so much, and she added very quickly :—

"And, besides—I am—I am a little cold."

At this statement he got angry.

"Ah! yes, still your idea of the foot-water bath. But look here, deuce take it! you only had one cold since you came here."

The night came. She went up to her room, for she had insisted on having a separate apartment. She went to bed. Even in the bed she felt cold.

THE FIRST SNOWFALL.

She thought "it was like this always, always, till death."

And she thought of her husband. How could he have said this :—

"You have only had one cold since you came here!"

Then she must get ill; she must cough in order that he might understand what she suffered!

And she was filled with indignation, the angry indignation of a weak, a timid, being.

She must cough. Then, without doubt, he would take pity on her. Well, she would cough; he would hear her coughing; the doctor should be called in; he would see that her husband, he would see.

She got up with her legs and her feet naked, and a childish idea made her smile :—

"I want a hot-water stove, and I must have it. I shall cough so much that he'll have to bring one into the house."

And she sat down almost naked in a chair. She waited an hour, two hours. She shivered, but she did not catch cold. Then she resolved to make use of a bold expedient.

She noiselessly left her room, descended the stairs, and opened the garden-gate.

The earth, covered with snow, seemed dead. She abruptly thrust forward her naked foot, and plunged it into the light icy froth. A sensation of cold, painful as a wound, mounted up in her heart. However, she stretched out the other leg, and began to descend the steps slowly.

Then she advanced through the grass, saying to herself :—

"I'll go as far as the fir-trees."

She walked with quick steps, out of breath, choking every time she drove her foot through the snow.

She touched the first fir-tree with her hand, as if to convince herself that she carried out her plan to the end; then she went back into the house. She believed two or three times that she was going to fall, so torpid and weak did she feel. Before going in, meanwhile, she sat in that icy sun, and she even gathered some in order to rub her breast.

Then she went in, and got into bed. It seemed to her, at the end of an hour, that she had a swarm of ants in her throat, and that other ants were running all over her limbs. She slept, however.

Next day, she was coughing, and she could not get up.

She got inflammation of the lungs. She became delirious; and in her delirium she asked for a hot-water stove. The doctor insisted on having one put in. Henry yielded, but with an irritated repugnance.

* * *

She cannot be cured. The lungs severely attacked, made those who attended on her uneasy about her life.

"If she remains here, she will not last as long as the next cold weather," said the doctor.

She was sent to the South. She came to Cannes, recognised the sun, loved the sea, and breathed the air of orange-blossoms.

Then, in the spring, she returned towards the North.

But she now lived with the fear of being cured, with the fear of the long winters of Normandy; and as soon as she was better, she opened her windows by night, while thinking of the sweet banks of the Mediterranean.

And now she was going to die. She knew it, and yet she was contented.

She unfolds a newspaper, which she has not already opened, and read this heading. —

"The first snow in Paris."

After this, she shivers and yet smiles. She looks across at the Estrel, which is turning rose coloured under the setting sun. She looks at the vast blue sky, so blue, so very blue, and the vast blue sea, so very blue also, and she rises up.

And then returns to the house, with slow steps, only stopping to cough, for she has remained out too long, and she has caught cold, a slight cold.

She finds a letter from her husband. She opens it, still smiling, and she reads —

"My dear Love, I hope you are going on well, and that you do not regret too much our beautiful district. We have had for some days past a good frost, which announces snow. For my part I adore this weather, and you understand that I am keeping that cursed hot-water stove of yours lighted"

She ceases reading, quite happy at the thought that she has had her hot-water stove. Her right hand, which holds the letter, falls down slowly over her knee, while she raises her left hand to her mouth, in an effort to calm the obstinate cough which is tearing her chest.

THE FARMER'S WIFE.

BARON Rene du Treilles said to me :—
 "Will you come and open the hunting season with me in my farmhouse at Marville? You will, by doing so, my dear fellow, give me the greatest pleasure. Besides, I am all alone. This will be such a hard hunting-bout, to start with, and the house where I sleep is so primitive that I can only bring my most intimate friends there."

I accepted the invitation. So on Sunday, by the railway-line running into Normandy, at the station of Alvimare, we got out, and Baron Rene, pointing out to me a country jaunting-car, harnessed to a restive horse, driven by a big peasant with white hair, said to me :—

"Here is our equipage, my dear boy."

The man extended his hand to his landlord, and the Baron pressed it warmly, asking :—

"Well, Maitre Lebrument, how are you?"

"Always the same, M'sieur l'Baron."

We jumped into this hencoop suspended and shaken on two immense wheels. And the young horse, after a violent swerve, started into a gallop, flinging us into the air like balls. Every fall backward in the wooden bench gave me the most dreadful pain.

The peasant kept repeating in his calm, monotonous voice :—

"There, there! it's all right, all right, Montard, all right!"

But Montard scarcely heard, and kept scampering along like a goat.

Our two dogs behind us, in the empty part of the hencoop, stood erect, and sniffed the air.

the plains, from which emanated the smell of game.

The Baron gazed into the distance, with a sad eye, at the vast Norman landscape, undulating and melancholy, like an immense English park, where the farmyards, surrounded by two or four rows of trees, and full of dwarfed apple-trees, which rendered the houses invisible, gave a vista, as far as the eye could see, of old forest trees, tufts of wood and hedgerows, which artistic gardeners look out for when they are tracing the lines of princely estates.

And Rene de Treilles suddenly exclaimed :--

"I love this soil : I have my very roots in it !"

A pure Norman, tall and strong, with a more or less projecting paunch of the old race of adventurers who went to found kingdoms on the shores of every ocean. He was about fifty years of age, ten years less perhaps than the farmer who was driving us.

The latter was a lean peasant, all skin and bone, one of those men who live a hundred years.

After two hours' travelling over stony roads, across that green and monotonous plain, the vehicle entered one of those fruit-gardens which adorn the fronts of farm-houses, and it drew up before an old structure falling into decay, where an old maid-servant stood waiting at the side of a young fellow, who seized the horse's bridle.

We entered the farm-house. The smoky kitchen was high and spacious. The copper utensils and the earthenware glistened under the reflection of the big fire. A cat lay asleep under the table. Within, one felt the odour of milk, of apples, of smoke, that indescribable smell peculiar to old houses where peasants have lived--the odour of the soil, of the walls, of furniture, the odour of stale soup, of washing, and of the old inhabitants,

the smell of animals and human beings intermingled, of things, and of persons, the odour of time and of things that have passed away.

I went out to have a look at the farmyard. It was big, full of apple-trees, dwarfed and crooked, and laden with fruit, which fell on the grass and around them. In this farmyard the Norman smell of apples was as strong as that of the orange-trees which blossom on the banks of Southern rivers.

Four rows of beeches surrounded this enclosure. They were so tall that they seemed to touch the clouds, at this hour of night-fall, and their summits through which the night-winds passed shook and sang a sad, interminable song.

I re-entered the house.

The Baron was warming his feet at the fire, and was listening to the farmer's talk about country matters. He talked about marriages, births, and deaths, then about the fall in the price of corn, and the latest news about the selling value of cattle. The "Veularde" (as he called a cow that had been bought at the fair of Venlès) had calved in the middle of June. The cider had not been first-class last year. The apricot-apples were almost disappearing from the country.

Then we had dinner. It was a good rustic meal, simple and abundant, long and tranquil. And, while we were dining, I noticed the special kind of friendly familiarity which had struck me from the start between the Baron and the peasant.

Without, the beeches continued sobbing in the night-wind, and our two dogs, shut up in a shed, were whining and howling in an uncanny fashion. The fire was dying out in the big grate. The maid-servant had gone to bed. Maître Lebfulment said in his turn:—

"If you don't mind, Monsieur le Baron, I'm going to bed. I am not used to staying up late."

The Baron extended his hand towards him, and said —

"Go, my friend," in so cordial a tone, that I said, as soon as the man had disappeared :—

"He is devoted to you, this farmer?"

"Better than that, my dear fellow! It is a drama, an old drama, simple and very sad, that attaches him to me. Well, here is the story. —

"You know that my father was a Colonel in a cavalry regiment. His orderly was this young fellow, now an old man, the son of a farmer. Then, when my father retired from the army, he took this retired soldier, then about forty, as his servant; I was at that time about thirty. We lived there in our old chateau of Valrenne, near Candebec-in Caux.

"At this period my mother's chambermaid was one of the prettiest girls you could see, fair-skinned, slender, and sprightly in manner, a genuine specimen of the fascinating abigail, such as we scarcely ever find now-a-days. To-day these creatures spring up into lussies before their time. Paris, with the aid of the railways, attracts them, calls them, takes hold of them, as soon as they are bursting into womanhood, these little sluts, who, in old times, remained simple maid-servants. Every man passing by, as long ago recruiting sergeants did with conscripts, entices and debauches them—these foolish lassies—and we have now only the scum of the female sex for servant-maids, all that is dull, nasty, common, and ill formed, too ugly even for gallantry.

"Well, this girl was charming, and I often gave her a kiss in dark corners, nothing more, I swear to you! She was virtuous, besides; and I had some respect for my mother's house, which is more than can be said of the blackguards of the present day.

"Now it happened that my man-servant, the ex-soldier, the old farmer you have just seen, fell in love with this girl, but in an unusual sort of way. The first thing we noticed was that his memory was affected, he did not pay any attention to anything.

"My father was incessantly repeating, 'Look here, Jean! What's the matter with you? Are you unwell?'

He replied,

"No, no, M'sieur le Baron. There's nothing the matter with me."

"He got thin. Then, when serving at table, he broke glasses and let platos fall. We thought he must have been attacked by some nervous malady, and we sent for the doctor, who thought he could detect symptoms of spinal disease. Then my father, full of anxiety about his faithful man-servant, decided to place him in a private hospital. When the poor fellow heard of my father's intentions he made a clean breast of it.

"M'sieur le Baron—"

"Well, my boy?"

"You see, the thing I want is not physic."

"Ha! what is it, then?"

"It's marriage!"

"My father turned round and stared at him in astonishment.

"What's that you say, eh?"

"It's marriage!"

"Marriage? So then, you donkey, you're in love."

"That's how it is, M'sieur le Baron."

"And my father began to laugh in such an immoderate fashion that my mother called out through the wall of the next room:—

"What in the name of goodness is the matter with you, Gontran?"

"He replied :—

" 'Come here, Catherine.' "

"And, when she came in, he told, with tears in his eyes from sheer laughter, that his idiot of a servant-man was love-sick.

"But my mother, instead of laughing, was deeply affected.

" 'Who is it that you have fallen in love with my poor fellow?' she asked.

"He answered, without hesitation :—

" 'With Louise, Madame le Baronne.' "

"My mother said, with the utmost gravity :

" 'We must try to arrange the matter the best way we can.' "

"So Louise was sent for, and questioned by my mother, and she said in reply that she knew all about Jean's liking for her, that, in fact, Jean had spoken to her about it several times, but that she did not want him. She refused to say why.

"And two months elapsed, during which my father and mother never ceased to urge this girl to marry Jean. As she declared she was not in love with any other man, she could not give any serious reason for her refusal. My father, at last, overcame her resistance by means of a big present of money : and started the pair of them on a farm on the estate—this very farm. At the end of three years, I learned that Louise had died of consumption. But my father and mother died, too, in their turn, and it was two years more before I found myself face to face with Jean.

"At last, one autumn day, about the end of October, the idea came into my head to go hunting on this part of my estate, which my tenant had told me was full of game.

"So, one evening, one wet evening, I arrived

at this house. I was shocked to find the old soldier, who had been my father's servant, perfectly white-haired, though he was not more than forty-five or forty-six years of age. I made him dine with me, at the very table where we're now sitting. It was raining hard. We could hear the rain battering at the roof, the walls, and the windows, flowing in a perfect deluge into the farmyard, and the dog was howling in the shed, where the other dogs are howling to-night.

"All of a sudden, when the servant maid had gone to bed, the man said in a loud voice :-

" 'M'sieur le Baron '

" 'What is it, my dear Jean?'

" 'I have something to tell you.'

" 'Tell it, my dear Jean.'

" 'You remember Louise, my wife.'

" 'Certainly, I do remember her.'

" 'Well, she left a message for you.'

" 'What was it?'

" 'A--a--well, it was what you might call a confession.'

" 'Ha . . . and what was it about?'

" 'It was--it was--I'd rather, all the same, tell you nothing about it--but I must--I must. Well, it's this--it wasn't consumption she died of at all. It was grief--well, that's the long and the short of it. As soon as she came to live here, after we were married, she grew thin; she changed so that you wouldn't know her, M'sieur le Baron. It was all just as before I married her, but it was different, too, quite another sort of thing.

" 'I sent for the doctor. He said it was her liver that was affected--he said it was what he called a 'hepatic' complaint--I don't know these

big words, M'sieu le Baron. Then I bought medicine for her, heaps on heaps of bottles, that cost about three hundred francs. But she'd take none of them; she wouldn't have them; she said: 'It's no use, my poor Jean. it wouldn't do me any good!' I saw well that she had some hidden trouble; and then I found her one time crying, and I didn't know what to do, no, I didn't know what to do. I bought her caps and dresses, and hair-oil, and earrings for her. No good! And I saw that she was going to die. And so one night in the end of November, one snowy night, after remaining the whole day without stirring out of bed, she told me to send for the Curé. So I went for him. As soon as he had come, she saw him. Then she asked to let me come into the room, and she said to me, 'Jean, I'm going to make a confession to you. I owe it to you. I have never been false to you, never, never, before or after you married me. M'sieu le Curé is there, and can tell it is so, and he knows my soul. Well, listen, Jean. If I am dying, it is because I was not able to console myself for leaving the chateau, because I was too fond of the young Baron Monsieur Rene, too fond of him, mind you, Jean, there was no harm in it! This is the thing that's killing me. When I could see him no more, I felt that I should die! If I could only have seen him, I might have lived, only seen him, nothing more. I wish you'd tell him some day, by-and-by, when I am no longer here. You will tell him, swear you will, Jean—swear it in the presence of M'sieur le Curé! It will console me to know that he will know it one day, that this was the cause of my death! Swear it!'

“Well, I gave her my promise, M'sieu le Baron! and, on the faith of an honest man, I have kept my word.”

"And then he ceased speaking, his eyes filling with tears."

* * *

"Upon my soul, my dear boy, you can't form any idea of the emotion that filled me when I heard this poor devil, whose wife I had caused the death of, without knowing it, telling me this story on that wet night in this very kitchen.

"I exclaimed, 'Ah! my poor Jean, my poor Jean!'

"He murmured, 'Well, that's all, M'sieu le Baron. I could do nothing, one way or another . . . and now it's all over!'

"I caught his hand across the table, and I began to cry.

"He asked: 'Will you come and see her grave?' I nodded by way of assent, for I couldn't speak. He rose up, lighted a lantern, and we walked through the blinding rain, which, in the light of the lamp, looked like falling arrows.

"He opened a gate, and I saw some crosses of black wood.

"Suddenly, he said, 'There it is, in front of a marble slab,' and he flashed the lantern close to it so that I could read the inscription.—

"To Louise-Hortense Marinet, wife of Jean Francois Lebrument, farmer. She was a faithful Wife! God rest her Soul!"

"We fell on our knees in the damp grass, he and I, with the lantern between us, and I saw the rain beating on the white marble slab. And I thought of the heart of her sleeping there in her grave. Ah! poor heart! poor heart!"

* * *

"Since then, I come here every year. And I don't know why, but I feel as if I were guilty of some crime in the presence of this man, who always shows that he forgives me!"

BOITELLI

PERL BOITELLI (Antoine) had the reputation through the whole county of a specialist in dirty jobs. Every time a pit, a dunghill, or a cess-pool required to be cleared away, or a dirt hole to be cleansed out, he was the person employed to do it.

He would come there with his nightman's tools and his wooden shoes covered with mud, and would set to work, whining incessantly about the nature of his occupation. When people asked him, then, why he did this loathsome work, he would reply resignedly —

"Faith, 'tis for my children, whom I must support. This brings me in more than anything else."

He had, indeed, fourteen children. If anyone asked him what had become of them, he would say, with an air of indifference —

"There are only eight of them left in the house. One is out at service, and five are married."

When the questioner wanted to know whether they were well married, he replied vivaciously —

"I did not cross them. I crossed them in nothing. They married just as they pleased. We shouldn't go against people's likings, it turns out badly. I am a night-cum man, because my parents went against my likings. But for this I would have become a workman like the other."

Here is the way his parents had thwarted him in his likings.

He was at the time a soldier stationed at Havre, not more stupid than another, or sharper either, a rather simple fellow, in truth. During his hours of freedom his greatest pleasure was to walk along the quay, where the bird-dealers congregated. Sometimes alone, sometimes with a soldier from

his own part of the country, he would slowly saunter along by cages where the parrots with green backs and yellow heads from the banks of the Amazon, the parrots with grey backs and red heads from Senegal, enormous macaws, which look like birds brought up in conservatories, with their flower-like feathers, their plumes and their tufts, the paroquets of every shape, who seemed painted with minute care by that excellent miniaturist, God Almighty, and the little ones, all the little young birds, hopping about, yellow, blue, and variegated, mingling their cries with the noise of the quay, add to the din caused by the unloading of the vessels, as well as by passengers and vehicles, a violent clamour, loud, shrill, and deafening, as if from some distant, monstrous forest.

Boitelle would stop with strained eyes, wide-open mouth, laughing and enraptured, showing his teeth to the captive cockatoos, who kept nodding their white or yellow top-knots towards the glaring red of his breeches and the copper buckle of his belt. When he found a bird that could talk, he put questions to it, and if it happened at the time to be disposed to reply and to hold conversation with him, he would remain there till nightfall, filled with gaiety and contentment. He also found heaps of fun in looking at the monkeys, and could conceive no greater luxury for a rich man than to possess these animals, just like cats and dogs. This kind of taste for the exotic he had in his blood, as people have a taste for the chase, or for medicine, or for the priesthood. He could not keep himself, every time the gates of the barracks opened, from going back to the quay, as if he felt himself drawn towards it by an irresistible longing.

Now, on one occasion, having stopped almost in

ecstasy before an enormous araruna, which was swelling out its plumes, bending forward, and bridling up again, as if making the court-curtseys of parrot-land, he saw the door of a little tavern adjoining the bird-dealer's shop opening, and his attention was attracted by a young negress, with a silk kerchief tied round her head, sweeping into the street the rubbish and the sand of the establishment.

Boitelle's attention was soon divided between the bird and the woman, and he really could not tell which of these two beings he contemplated with the greater astonishment and delight.

The negress, having got rid of the sweepings of the tavern, raised her eyes, and, in her turn, was dazzled by the soldier's uniform. There she stood facing him, with her broom in her hands as if she were carrying arms for him, while the araruna continued making curtseys. Now, at the end of a few seconds, the soldier began to get embarrassed by this attention, and he walked away gingerly, so as not to present the appearance of beating a retreat.

But he came back. Almost every day he passed in front of the Colonial Tavern, and often he could distinguish through the window-panes the figure of the little black-skinned maid filling out "backs" or glasses of brandy for the sailors of the port. Frequently, too, she would come out to the door on seeing him; soon, without even having exchanged a word, they smiled at one another like acquaintances; and Boitelle felt his heart moved when he saw suddenly glittering between the dark lips of the girl her shining row of white teeth. At length he ventured one day to enter, and was quite surprised to find that she could speak French like everyone else. The bottle of lemonade, of which she was good enough to accept a glassful, remained

in the soldier's recollection, memorably delicious, and it grew into a custom with him to come and absorb in this little tavern on the quay all the agreeable drinks which he could afford.

For him it was a treat, a happiness, on which his thoughts were constantly dwelling, to watch the black hand of the little maid pouring out something into his glass, whilst her teeth, brighter than her eyes, showed themselves as she laughed. When they had kept company in this way for two months they became fast friends, and Boitelle after his first astonishment at discovering that this negress was in her excellent principles as good as the best girls in the country, that she exhibited a regard for economy, industry, religion, and good conduct, loved her more on that account, and became so much smitten with her that he wanted to marry her.

He told her about his intentions, which made her dance with joy. Besides, she had a little money, left her by an oyster-dealer, who had picked her up when she had been left on the quay at Havre by an American captain. This captain had found her, when she was only about six years old, lying on bales of cotton in the hold of his ship some hours after his departure from New York. On his arrival at Havre, he there abandoned her to the care of this compassionate oyster-dealer the little black creature, who had been hidden on board his vessel, he could not tell how or why.

The oyster-dealer having died, the young negress became a servant at the Colonial Tavern.

Antoine Boitelle added "This will be all right if the parents don't go against it. I will never go up against them, you understand, never! I'm going to say a word or two to them the first time I go back to the country."

On the following week, in fact, having obtained

twenty-four hours' leave, he went to his family who cultivate a little farm at Tourteville near Yvetot.

He waited till the meal was finished, the hour when the coffee, baptized with brandy, makes people more open-hearted, before informing his parents that he had found a girl answering so well to his likings in every way that there could not exist any other in all the world so perfectly suited to him.

The old people, at this observation, immediately assumed a circumspect air, and wanted explanations. Besides, he had concealed nothing from them except the colour of her skin.

She was a servant, without much means, but strong, thrifty, clean, well-conducted, and sensible. All these things were better than money would be in the hands of a bad housewife. Moreover, she had a few sous, left her by a woman who had reared her, a good number of sous, almost a little dowry, fifteen hundred francs in the savings' bank. The old people, overcome by his talk, and relying, too, on their own judgment, were gradually giving way, when he came to the delicate point. Laughing, in rather a constrained fashion, he said :—

"There is only one thing you may not like. She is not a white slip."

They did not understand, and he had to explain at some length, and very cautiously, to avoid shocking them, that she belonged to the dusky race, of which they had only seen samples amongst figures exhibited at Epinal. Then, they became restless, perplexed, alarmed, as if he had proposed a union with the Devil.

The mother said : "Black? How much of her is black? Is the whole of her?"

He replied: "Certainly. Everywhere, just as you are white everywhere."

The father interposed: "Black? Is it as black as the pot?"

The son answered: "Perhaps a little less than that. She is black, but not disgustingly black. The Curé's cassock is black, but it is not uglier than a surplice, which is white."

The father said: "Are there more black people besides her in the country?"

And the son, with an air of conviction, exclaimed: "Certainly!"

But the old man shook his head.

"This must be disagreeable!"

And the son: -

"It isn't more disagreeable than anything else, seeing that you get used to it in no time."

The mother asked: -

"It doesn't soil linen more than other skins, this black skin?"

"Not more than your own, as it is her proper colour."

Then, after many other questions, it was agreed that the parents should see the girl before coming to any decision, and that the young fellow, whose period of services was coming to an end in the course of a month, should bring her to the house in order that they might examine her, and decide, by talking the matter over, whether or not she was too dark to enter the Boitelle family.

Antoine accordingly announced that on Sunday, the 22nd May, the day of his discharge, he would start for Tourteville with his sweetheart.

She had put on, for this journey to the house of her lover's parents, her most beautiful and most gaudy clothes, in which yellow, red and blue were the prevailing colours, so that she had the appearance of one adorned for a national fête.

At the terminus, as they were leaving Havre, people stared at her very much, and Boitelle was proud of giving his arm to a person who commanded so much attention. Then, in the third-class carriage, in which she took a seat by his side, she excited so much astonishment amongst the peasants that the people in the adjoining compartments got up on their benches to get a look at her, over the wooden partition, which divided the different portions of the carriage from one another. A child, at sight of her, began to cry with terror, another concealed his face in his mother's apron. Everything went off well, however, up to their arrival at their destination. But, when the train slackened its rate of motion as they drew near Yvetot, Antoine felt ill at ease, as he would have done at an inspection when he did not know his drill-practice. Then, as he put his head out through the carriage door, he recognised some distance away his father, who was holding the bridle of the horse yoked to a car, and his mother, who had made her way to the raised portion of the platform, where a number of spectators had gathered.

He stepped out first, gave his hand to his sweetheart, and, holding himself erect, as if he were escorting a general, he advanced towards his family.

The mother, on seeing this black lady, in variegated costume, in her son's company, remained so stupefied that she could not open her mouth; and the father found it hard to hold the horse, which the engine or the negress caused to rear for some time without stopping. But Antoine, suddenly seized with the unmingled joy of seeing once more the old people, rushed forward with open arms, embraced his mother, embraced his father, in spite of the nag's fright, and then turn-

ing toward his companion, at whom the passengers on the platform stopped to stare with amazement, he proceeded to explain.

"Here she is! I told you that, at first sight, she is an odd piece, but as soon as you know her, in very truth, there is not a better sort in the whole world. Say good-morrow to her without making any posher about it."

Thereupon Merc Bontelle, herself nearly frightened out of her wits, made a sort of curtsy, while the father took off his cap, murmuring —

"I wish you good-luck."

Then, without further delay, they climbed up on the car, the two women at the lower end on seats, which made them jump up and down, as the vehicle went jolting along the road, and the two men outside on the front seat.

Nobody spoke. Antoine, ill at ease, whistled a brisk room air, his father looked the wag, and his mother, from where she sat in the corner, kept casting shy glances at the negress, whose forehead and cheek bones shone in the sunlight, like well blacked shoes.

Wishing to break the silence, Antoine turned round.

"Well," said he, "we don't seem inclined to talk."

"We must get time," replied the old woman.

He went on —

"Come! tell us the little story about that heap of yours that laid eight eggs."

It was a funny anecdote of long standing in the family. But, as his mother still remained silent, paralysed by emotion, he started the talking himself, and narrated, with much laughter on his own part, this memorable adventure. The father, who knew it by heart, brightened at the opening words of the narrative; his wife soon followed his ex-

ample, and the negress herself, when he reached the drollest part of it, suddenly gave vent to a laugh so noisy, rolling, and torrent-like, that the horse, becoming excited, broke into a gallop for a little while.

This served as the introduction to their acquaintanceship. The company at length began to chat.

On reaching the house when they had all alighted, and he had conducted his sweetheart to a room, so that she might take off her dress, to avoid staining it, while she would be preparing a good dish intended to win the old people's affections while appealing to their stomachs, he drew aside his parents, near the door, and with beating heart, asked : —

"Well, what do you say now?"

The father said nothing. The mother, less timid, exclaimed : —

"She is too black. No, indeed, this is too much for me. It turns my blood."

"That may be, but it is only for a moment."

Then they made their way into the interior of the house, where the good woman was somewhat affected at the spectacle of the negress engaged in cooking. She at once proceeded to assist her, with petticoats tucked up, active in spite of her age.

The meal was an excellent one, very long, very enjoyable. When they had afterwards taken a turn together, Antoine said to his father :—

"Well, dad, what do you say to this?"

The peasant took care never to compromise himself.

"I have no opinion about it. Ask you mother."

So Antoine went back to his mother, and leading her to the end of the room, said :—

"Well, mother, what do you think of her?"

"My poor lad, she is really too black. If she were only a little less black, I would not go against

you, but this is too much. One would think it was Satan!"

He did not press her, knowing how obstinate the old woman had always been, and he felt a tempest of disappointment sweeping over his heart. He was turning over his mind what he ought to do, what plan he could devise, surprised, moreover, that she had not conquered them already as she had captivated himself. And they, all four, set out with slow steps through the cornfields, having again relapsed into silence. Whenever they passed a fence, they saw a countryman sitting on the stile, and a group of boys climbed up to stare at them, and everyone rushed out into the road to see the "black" whom young Boitelle had brought home with him. At a distance they noticed people scampering across the fields just as when the drum beats to draw public attention to some living phenomenon. Pete and Mere Boitelle, scared by this curiosity, which was exhibited everywhere through the country at their approach, quickened their pace, walking side by side, and leaving far behind their son, when his dark companion asked what his parents thought of her.

He hesitatingly replied that they had not yet made up their minds.

But, on the village-green, people rushed out of all the houses in a flutter of excitement; and, at the sight of the gathering rabble, old Boitelle took to his heels, and regained his abode, whilst Antoine, swelling with rage, his sweetheart on his arm, advanced majestically under the staring eyes which opened in amazement.

He understood that it was at an end, and there was no hope for him, that he could not marry his negress; she also understood it; and as they drew near the farmhouse they both began to weep. As soon as they got back to the house, she obce

more took off her dress to aid the mother in the household duties, and followed her everywhere, to the dairy, to the stable, to the hen-house, taking on herself the hardest part of the work, repeating always, "Let me do it, Madame Boitelle," so that, when night came on, the old woman, touched but inexorable, said to her son: "She is a good, all the same. 'Tis a pity she is so black; but indeed she is too much so. I couldn't get used to it. She must go back again. She is too, too black."

• And young Boitelle said to his sweetheart:—

"She will not consent. She thinks you are too black. You must go back again. I will go with you to the train. No matter—don't fret. I am going to talk to them after you have started."

He then conducted her to the railway station, still cheering her with hope, and, when he had kissed her, he put her into a train, which he watched as it passed out of sight, his eyes swollen with tears.

In vain did he appeal to the old people. They would never give their consent.

• And when he had told his story, which was known all over the country, Antoine Boitelle would always add:—

"From that time forward I have had no heart for anything for anything at all. No trade suited me any longer, and so I became what I am—a nightcartman."

• People would say to him:—

"Yet you got married."

• "Yes, and I can't say that my wife didn't please me, seeing that I've got fourteen children, but she is not the other one, oh no—certainly not!" The

other one, mark you, my negress, she had only to give me one glance, and I felt as if I were in Heaven!"

THE LAMOR'S DAUGHTER.

THE steamboat *Kieber* had stopped, and I was admiring the beautiful Bay of Bougie, that was opened out before us. The high hills were covered with forests, and in the distance the yellow sands formed a beach of powdered gold, whilst the sun shed its fiery rays on the white houses of the town.

The warm African breeze blew the odour of the great, mysterious continent into which men of the Northern races but rarely penetrate, into my face. For three months, I had been wandering on the borders of that great unknown world, on the outskirts of that strange world of the ostrich, the camel, the gazelle, the hippopotamus, the gorilla, the lion and the tiger, and the negro. I had seen the Arab galloping like the wind, and passing like a floating standard, and I had slept under the brown tents, the moving habitation of those white birds of the desert, and I felt as it were, intoxicated with light, with fancy, and with space.

But now, after this final excursion, I should have to start, to return to France and to Paris, that city of useless chatter, of common-place cares, and of continual hand-shaking, and I should bid adieu

In all that I had got to like so much, which was so new to me, which I had scarcely had time to see thoroughly, and which I so much regret to leave.

A fleet of small boats surrounded the steamer, and, jumping into on—rowed by a negro lad, I soon reached the quay near the old Saracen gate, whose grey ruins at the entrance of the Kabyle town, looked like an old escutcheon of nobility. Whilst I was standing by the side of my portmanteau, looking at the great steamer lying at anchor in the roads, and filled with admiration at that unique shore, and that semi-circle of hills bathed in blue light which were more beautiful than those of Ajaccio, or of Porto, in Corsica, a heavy hand was laid on my shoulder, and on turning round I saw a tall man with a long beard, dressed in white flannel, and wearing a straw hat, standing by my side, and looking at me with his blue eyes.

"Are you not an old school fellow of mine?" he said.

"It is very possible. What is your name?"

"Tremoulin."

"By Jove! You were in the same class as I was."

"Ah! Old fellow, I recognised you immediately."

He seemed so pleased, so happy at seeing me, that in an outburst of friendly selfishness, I shook both the hands of my former school-fellow heartily, and felt very pleased at meeting him thus.

For four years, Tremoulin had been one of the best and most intimate school-friends, one of those whom we are too apt to forget as soon as we leave. In those days he had been a tall, thin fellow, whose head seemed to be too heavy for his body, it was a large, round head, and hung sometimes to the

right and sometimes to the left on to his chest. Tremoulin was very clever, however, and had a marvellous aptitude for learning, and had an instinctive intuition for all literary studies, and gained nearly all the prizes in our class.

We were fully convinced at school, that he would turn out a celebrated man, a poet, no doubt, for he wrote verses, and was full of ingeniously, sentimental ideas. His father, who kept a chemist's shop near the *Pantheon* was not supposed to be very well off, and I had lost sight of him as soon as he had taken his Bachelor's degree, and now I naturally asked him what he was doing there.

"I am a planter," he replied.

"Bah! You really plant?"

"And I have my harvest."

"What is it?"

"Grapes, from which I make wine."

"Is your wine-growing a success?"

"A great success."

"So much the better, old fellow."

"Were you going to the hotel?"

"Of course I was."

"Well, then, you must just come home with me instead."

"But . . ."

"The matter is settled."

And he said to the young negro who was watching our movements: "Take that home, Al."

And the lad put my portmanteau on his shoulder, and set off, raising the dust with his black feet, whilst Tremoulin took my arm and led me off. First of all, he asked about my journey, and what impressions it had had on me, and seeing how enthusiastic I was about it, he seemed to like me better than ever. He lived in an old Moorish

house, with an interior street, and commanded by a terrace, which, in its courtyard, without any windows, looking into the turn, commanded those of the neighbouring houses, as well as the bay, and the forests, the hill, and the open sea, and I could not help exclaiming

"Ah! This is what I like, the whole of the East lays hold of me in this place. You are indeed lucky to be living here! What nights you must spend upon that terrace! Do you sleep there?"

"Yes, in the summer. We will go on to it this evening. Are you fond of fishing?"

"What kind of fishing?"

"Fishing by torchlight."

"Yes I am particularly fond of it."

"Very well, then, we will go after dinner, and we will come back and drink herbier on my rock."

After I had had a bath, he took me to see the charming Kabyle town, a veritable cascade of white houses toppling down to the sea, and then, when it was getting dusk, we went in, and after an excellent dinner we went down to the quay, and we saw nothing except the fires and the stars, those large, bright, scintillating African stars. A boat was waiting for us, and as soon as we had got in, a man whose face I could not distinguish, began to row, whilst my friend was getting ready the brazier which he would light later, and he said, "You know I have a mania for a fish-spear, and nobody can handle it better than I can."

"Allow me to compliment you on your skill."

We had rowed round a kind of mole, and now we were in a small bay full of high rocks, whose shadows looked like towers built in the water, and I suddenly perceived that the sea was phosphorescent, and as the oars moved gently they seemed to light up moving flames, that followed

in our wake, and then died out, and I leant over the side of the boat and watched it, as we glided over the glimmering water in the darkness.

Where were we going to? I could not see my neighbours: in fact, I could see nothing but the luminous ripple, and the sparks of water dropping from the oars; it was hot, very hot, and the darkness seemed as hot as a furnace, and this mysterious motion, with these two men in that silent boat, had a peculiar effect upon me.

Suddenly the rower stopped. Where were we? I heard a slight scratching noise close to me, and I saw a hand, nothing but a hand, applying a lighted match to the iron grating, which was fastened over the bows of the boat, which was covered with wood, as if it had been a floating funeral pile, and which soon was blazing brightly and illuminating the boat and the two men, an old wrinkled sailor, with a pocket-handkerchief tied round his head, instead of a cap, and Tremoulin, whose fair beard glistened in the light.

The other began to row again, whilst Tremoulin kept throwing wood on the brazier, which burned red and brightly. I leant over the side again, and could see the bottom, and a few feet below us there was that strange country of the water, which vivifies plants and animals, just like the air of heaven does. Tremoulin, who was standing in the bows with his body bent forward, and holding the sharp-pointed trident in his hand, was on the look out with the ardent gaze of a beast of prey, watching for its spoil, and, suddenly, with a swift movement, he darted his forked weapon into the sea so vigorously, that it secured a large fish swimming near the bottom. It was a congor eel, which managed to wriggle, half dead as it was, into a puddle of the brackish water.

Tremoulin again threw his spear, and when he

pulled it up, I saw a great lump of red flesh, which palpitated, moved, rolled and unrolled, long, strong, soft feelers round the handle of the trident. It was an octopus, and Tremoulin opened his knife, and with a swift movement plunged it between the eyes, and killed it. And so our fishing continued until the wood began to run short. When there was not enough left to keep up the fire, Tremoulin dipped the braziers into the sea, and we were again buried in darkness.

The old sailor began to row again, slowly and regularly, though I could not tell where the land or where the port was. By-and-bye, however, I saw lights. We were nearing the harbour.

"Are you sleepy?" my friend said to me.

"Not the slightest."

"Then we will go and have a chat on the roof."

"I shall be delighted."

Just as we got on to the terrace I saw the crescent moon rising behind the mountains, and around us, the white houses, with their flat roofs, descended down towards the sea, whilst human forms were standing or lying on them, sleeping or dreaming under the stars, whole families wrapped in long gowns, and resting in the calm night, after the heat of the day.

It suddenly seemed to me as if the Eastern mind were taking possession of me, the poetical and legendary spirit of a people with simple and flowery thoughts. My head was full of the Bible and *The Arabian Nights*; I could hear the prophets proclaiming miracles, and I could see princesses wearing silk drawers on the roofs of the palaces, whilst delicate perfumes, whose smoke assumed the forms of genii, were burning on silver dishes, and I said to Tremoulin:—

"You are very fortunate in living here."

"I came here quite by accident," he replied.

"By accident?"

"Yes, accident and unhappiness brought me here."

"You have been unhappy?"

"Very unhappy."

He was standing in front of me, wrapped in his bournoose, and his voice had such a painful ring in it, that it almost made me shiver; after a moment's silence, however, he continued—

"I will tell you what my troubles have been; perhaps it will do me good to speak about them."

"Let me hear them."

"Do you really wish it?"

"Yes."

"Very well, then. You remember what I was at school; a sort of poet, brought up in a chemist's shop. I dreamt of writing books, and I tried it, after taking my degree, but I did not succeed. I published a volume of verse, and then a novel, and neither of them sold, and then I wrote a play, which was never acted.

"Next, I lost my heart, but I will not give you an account of my passion. Next door to my father's shop there was a tailor's, who had a daughter, with whom I fell in love. She was very clever, and had obtained her certificates for higher education, and her mind was bright and active, quite in keeping indeed with her body. She might have been taken for fifteen, although she was two-and-twenty. She was very small, with delicate features, outlines, and tints, just like some beautiful water-colour. Her nose, her mouth, her blue eyes, her light hair, her smile, her waist, her hands, all looked as if they were fit for a stained window, and not for everyday life, but

she was lively, supple, and incredibly active, and I was very much in love with her. I remember two or three walks in the Luxembourg Garden, near the *Medices* fountain, which were certainly the happiest hours of my life. I daresay you have known that foolish condition of tender madness, which causes us to think of nothing but acts of adoration! One really becomes possessed, haunted by a woman, and nothing exists for us, by the side of her.

"We soon became engaged, and I told her my prospects of the future, which she did not approve of. She did not believe that I was either a poet, a novelist, or a dramatic author, and thought a prosperous business could afford perfect happiness. So I gave up the idea of writing books, and resigned myself to selling them, and I bought a bookseller's business at Marseilles, the owner of which had just died.

"I had three very prosperous years. We had made our shop into a sort of literary drawing-room, where all the men of letters in the town used to come and talk. They came in, as if it had been a club, and exchanged ideas on books, on art, and especially on politics. My wife, who took a very active part in the business, enjoyed quite a reputation in the town, but, as for me, whilst they were all talking downstairs, I was working in my studio upstairs, which communicated with the shop by a winding staircase. I could hear their voices, their laughter, and their discussion, and sometimes I left off writing in order to listen. I kept in my own room to write a novel—which I never finished.

"The most regular frequenters of the shop were Monsieur Montina, a man of good private means, a tall, handsome man, like one meets in the South of France, with an olive skin, and dark, expres-

sive eyes, Monsieur Barbet, a magistrate, two merchants, who were partners, Messrs. Paucil and Labarreque, and General, the Marquis de la Fleche, the head of the Royalist party, the principal man in the whole district, an old fellow of sixty-six.

"My business prospered, and I was happy, very happy. One day, however, about three o'clock, when I was out on business, as I was going through the *Rue Saint Pierre*, I suddenly saw a woman come out of a house, whose figure and appearance were so much like my wife's that I should have said to myself, "There she is!" if I had not left her in the shop half an hour before, suffering from a headache. She was walking quickly on before me, without turning round, and in spite of myself I followed her, as I felt surprised and uneasy. I said to myself, "It is she, no, it is quite impossible, as she had a sick headache. And then, what could she have to do in that house. However, as I wished to have the matter cleared up, I made haste after her. I do not know whether she felt or guessed that I was behind her, or whether she recognised my step, but she turned round suddenly. It was she! When she saw me she grew very red and stopped, and then, with a smile, she said, 'Oh! Here you are?' I felt choking.

"Yes; so you have come out? And how is your headache?"

"It is better, and I have been out on an errand.

"Where?"

"To Lacausse's, in the Rue Cassinelli, to order some pencils."

"She looked me full in the face." She was not flushed now, but rather pale, on the contrary. Her clear, stupid eyes—ah! those women's eyes!—appeared to be full of truth, but I felt vaguely and painfully that they were full of lies. I was much

more confused and embarrassed than she was herself, without venturing to suspect, but sure that she was lying, though I did not know why, and so I merely said —

"You were quite right to go out, if you felt better."

"Oh! yes, my head is much better."

"Are you going home?"

"Yes, of course I am."

"I left her, and wandered about the streets by myself. What was going on? Whilst I was talking to her, I had an intuitive feeling of her falseness, but now I could not believe that it was so, and when I returned home to dinner, I was angry for having suspected her, even for a moment."

"Have you ever been jealous? It does not matter whether you have or not, but the first drop of jealousy had fallen into my heart, and that is always like a spark of fire. It did not formulate anything, and I did not think anything, I only knew that she had lied. You must remember that every night, after the customers and clerks had left, we were alone, and either strolled as far as the harbour, when it was fine, or remained talking in my office, if the weather was bad, and I used to open my heart to her without reserve, because I loved her. She was part of my life, the greater part, and all my happiness, and in her small hands she held my trusting, faithful heart captive."

"During the first days, those days of doubt, and before my suspicions increased and assumed a precise shape, I felt as depressed and chilly as when we are going to be seriously ill. I was continually cold, really cold, and could neither eat nor sleep. Why had she told me a lie? What was she doing in that house? I went there to try and find out something, but I could discover nothing. The man who rented the first floor, and who was an

upholsterer, had told me all about his neighbours, but without helping me in the least. A midwife had lived on the second floor, a dressmaker and a manicure and chiropodist on the third, and two coachmen and their families in the attics.

"Why had she told me a lie? It would have been so easy for her to have said that she had been to the dressmaker's or the chiropodist's. Oh! how I longed to question them also! I did not say so, for fear that she might guess my suspicions. One thing, however, was certain, she had been into that house, and had concealed the fact from me, and there was some mystery in it. But what? At one moment I thought there might be some laudable purpose in it, some charitable deed which she wished to hide, some information which she wished to obtain, and I found fault with myself for suspecting her. Have not all of us the right of our little, innocent secrets, a kind of second, interior life, for which one ought not to be responsible to anybody? Can a man, because he has taken a girl to be his companion through life, demand that she shall neither think nor do anything without telling him, either before or afterwards? Does the word marriage mean renouncing all liberty and independence? Was it not quite possible that she was going to the dressmaker's without telling me, or that she was going to assist the family of one of the coachmen? Or she might have thought that I might criticise, if not blame, her visit to the house. She knew me thoroughly, and my slightest peculiarities, and perhaps she feared a discussion, even if she did not think that I should find fault with her. She had very pretty hands, and I ended by supposing that she was having them secretly attended to by the manicure in the house which I suspected, and that she did not tell me of it, for fear that I should think her ex-

travagant. She was very methodical and economical, and looked after her household duties most carefully, and no doubt she thought that she would lower herself in my eyes, were she to confess that slight piece of feminine extravagance. Women have very many subtilties and finite tricks in their soul.

"But none of my own arguments reassured me. I was jealous, and I felt that my suspicion was affecting me terribly, that I was being devoured by it. I felt secret grief and anguish, and a thought which I still veiled, and I did not dare to lift the veil, for beneath it I should find a terrible doubt. . . A lover! . . . Had not she a lover? It was unlikely, impossible. . . A mere dream . . . and yet' . . .

"I continually saw Montina's face before my eyes. I saw that the tall, silly looking, handsome man, with his bright hair, smiling into her face, and I said to myself, 'He is the one!' I concocted a story of their intrigues. They had talked a book over together, had discussed the love adventures it contained, and found something in it that resembled them, and they had turned that analogy into reality. And so I watched them, a prey to the most terrible sufferings that a man can endure. I bought shoes with india-rubber soles, so that I might be able to walk about the house without making any noise, and I spent half my time in going up and down my little spiral staircase, in the hope of surprising them, but I always found that the clerk was with them.

"I lived in a constant state of suffering. I could no longer work, nor attend to my business. As soon as I went out, as soon as I had walked a hundred yards along the street, I said to myself, 'He is there!' and when I found he was not there, I went out again! But almost immediately

I went back again, thinking, 'He has come now!' and that went on every day.

"At night it was still worse, for I felt her against my side in bed asleep, or pretending to be asleep! Was she really sleeping? No, most likely not, was that another lie?

"I remained motionless on my back, hot from the warmth of her body, panting and tormented. Oh! how intensely I longed to get up, to get a hammer and to split her head open, so as to be able to see inside it! I know that I should have seen nothing except what is to be found in every head, and I should have discovered nothing, for that would have been impossible. And her eyes! When she looked at me I felt furious with rage. I looked at her . . . she looked at me! Her eyes were transparent, candid . . . and false, false! Nobody could tell what she was thinking of, and I felt inclined to run pins into them, and to destroy those mirrors of falseness.

"Ah! how well I could understand the Inquisition! I would have applied the torture, the boot . . . Speak! . . . Confess! You will not . . . Then wait! And I would have seized her by the throat until I choked her . . . Or else I would have held her fingers into the fire . . . Oh! how I should have enjoyed doing it! . . . Speak! . . . Speak . . . Speak . . . You will not! I would have held them on the coals, and when the tips were burnt, she would have confessed . . . certainly she would have confessed!"

Tremoulin was sitting up, shouting, with clenched fists. Around us, on the neighbouring roofs, people awoke and sat up, as he was disturbing their sleep. As for me, I was moved and powerfully interested, and in the darkness I could see that little woman, that little, fair, lively, artful woman, as if I had known her personally. I saw her still

ing her books, talking with the men whom her childish ways attracted, and in her delicate, doll-like head, I could see little crafty ideas, silly dreams, the dreams which a milliner smelling of musk attaches to all her heroes of romantic adventure. I suspected her, just like he did, I hated and detested her, and would have willingly burnt her fingers and made her confess.

Presently he continued more calmly: 'I do not know why I have told you all this, for I have never mentioned it to anyone, but then I have not seen anybody for two years.' And it was settling in my heart like a fermenting wine. I have got rid of it, and so much the worse for you. Well, I had made a mistake, but it was worse than I thought, much worse. Just listen. I employed the means which a man always does under such circumstances, and pretended that I was going away from home for a day, and whenever I did this my wife went out to lunch. I need not tell you how I bribed a waiter in the restaurant to which they used to go, so that I might surprise them.

"He was to open the door of their private room for me, and I arrived at the appointed time, with the fixed determination of killing them both. I could see the whole scene just as if it had already occurred! I could see myself going in. A small table covered with glasses, bottles, and plates separated her from Montina, and they would be so surprised when they saw me, that they would not even attempt to move, and without a word I should bring down the loaded stick which I had in my hand on the man's head. Killed by one blow, he would fall with his head on the table, and then, turning towards her, I should leave her time—a few moments—to understand it all and to stretch out her arms towards me, mad with terror

before dying in her turn. Oh! I was ready, strong, determined, and pleased, madly pleased, at the idea. The idea of the terrified look that she would throw at my raised stick, of her arms that she would stretch out to me, of her horrified cry, of her livid and convulsed looks, avenged me beforehand. I would not kill her at one blow! You will think me cruel, I daresay; but you do not know what a man suffers. To think that a woman, whether she be wife or mistress, whom one loves, gives herself to another, yields herself up to him as she does to you, and receives kisses from his lips, as she does from yours! It is terrible, an atrocious thing to think of. When one feels that torture, one is ready for anything. I only wonder that more women are not murdered, for every man who has been deceived longs to commit murder, has dreamt of it in the solitude of his own room, or on a deserted road, and has been haunted by the one fixed idea of satisfied vengeance.

"I arrived at the restaurant, and asked whether they were there. The waiter whom I had bribed replied: 'Yes, monsieur,' and taking me upstairs, he pointed to a door, and said: 'That is the room!' So I grasped my stick, as if my fingers had been made of iron, and went in. I had chosen my most appropriate moment, for they were kissing most lovingly, but it was not Montana, it was General de la Fleche, who was sixty-six years old, and I had so fully made up my mind that I should find the other one there, I was motionless from astonishment.

"And then . . . and then I really do not quite know what I thought; no, I really do not know. If I had found myself face to face with the other, I should have been convulsed with rage, but on seeing this old man, with fat stomach and pendulous cheeks, I was nearly choked with disgust.

She, who did not look fifteen, small and slim as she was, had given herself to this fat man, who was nearly paralysed, because he was a marquis and a general, the friend and representative of dethroned kings. No, I do not know what I felt, for what I thought. I would not have lifted my hand against this old man; it would have been a disgrace to me, and I no longer felt inclined to tell my wife, but all women who could be guilty of such things! I was no longer jealous, but felt distracted, as if I had seen the horror of horrors!

"Let people say what they like of me, they are not so vile as that! If a man is known to have given himself up to an old woman in that fashion, people point their finger at him. The husband or lover of an old woman is more despised than a thief. We men are a decent lot, as a rule, but many women, especially in Paris, are absolutely bad. They will give themselves to all men, old or young, from the most contemptible and different motives, because it is their profession, their vocation, and their function. They are the eternal, unconscious, and serene prostitutes, who give up their bodies because they are the merchandise of love, which they sell or give, to the old man who frequents the pavements with money in his pocket, or else for glory, to a lecherous old king, or to a celebrated and disgusting old man."

He vociferated like a prophet of old in a furious voice, under the starry sky, and with the rage of a man in despair, he repeated all the glorified disgrace of all the mistresses of old kings, the respectable shame of those virgins who marry old husbands, the tolerated disgrace of all those young women, who accept old kisses with a smile.

I could see them, as he evoked their memory, since the beginning of the world, surging round

us in that Eastern night, girls, beautiful girls with vile souls, who, like the lower animals, who know nothing of the age of the male, are devoted to some desires. They rose up before one, the handmaids of the patriarchs, who are mentioned in the Bible, Hagar, Ruth, the daughters of Lot, Abigail, Abishag, the virgin of Shunam, who animated David with her caresses when he was dying, and the others, young, stout, white patricians or plebeians, irresponsible females belonging to a master, and submissive slaves, whether caught by the attraction of royalty, or bought as slaves!

"What did you do?" I asked.

"I went away," he replied simply. And we remained, sitting side by side for a long time without speaking, only dreaming!

I have retained an impression of that evening that I can never forget. All that I saw, felt, and heard, our fishing excursion, the octopus also, perhaps that harrowing story, amidst those white figures on the neighbouring roofs, all seemed to concert in producing a unique sensation. Certain meetings, certain inexplicable combinations of things, evidently contain a larger quantity of the secret quiescence of life, than that which is spread over the ordinary events of our days, without anything exceptional happening to them.

THE END

